LIBRARY OF
WELLESLEY COLLEGE

1875

PRESENTED BY
Dorothy Cleaveland

THE MOTHER OF CHRIST

OR THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN CATHOLIC TRADITION, THEOLOGY, AND DEVOTION

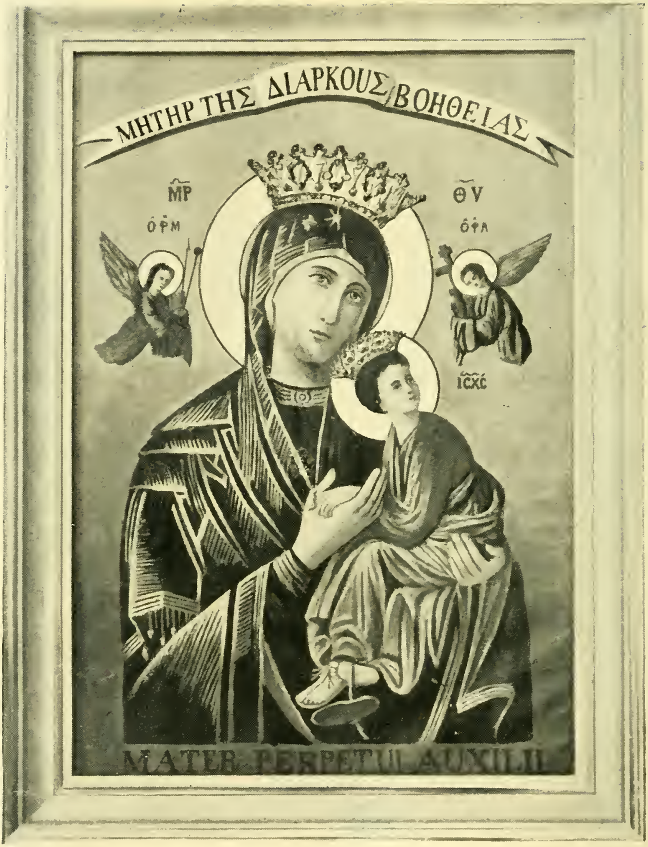
AENIGMA CHRISTI

(*Videmus nunc in aenigmate.*)

None can be like Him, none.
In love? In grief? Nay, man's capacity,
Rifled unto its depths, is reached, is done—
Christ's, an unfathomed sea.

None can be like Him, none;
Not she who bore Him. Yet, I saw the whole
Eternal, infinite Christ within the one
Small mirror of her soul.

ALICE MEYNELL.


ΜΗΤΗΡ ΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΡΚΟΥΣ ΒΟΗΘΕΙΑΣ
ΜΡ
ΘΥ
Ο ΑΡ Μ
Ο ΑΡ Γ
IC XC
MATER PERPETUI AUXILII

THE ICON OF OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL SUCCOUR VENERATED IN ST. PETER'S GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ALEXANDRIA.

THE MOTHER OF CHRIST; *or*, THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY IN CATHOLIC TRADITION, THEOLOGY, AND DEVOTION

By O. R. VASSALL-PHILLIPS, C.SS.R.

Author of "The Mustard Tree," "Catholic Christianity," "The Work of St. Optatus Translated into English."

Domine, dilexi decorem Domus Tuæ, et locum
habitationis Gloriæ Tuæ.

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD.
28 ORCHARD STREET W. 1
8-10 PATERNOSTER ROW E.C. 4
AND . AT . MANCHESTER . BIRMINGHAM . AND . GLASGOW
1922

Imprimi potest.

IOAN. CHARLTON, C.SS.R.,
PROV. ANGL. SUP.

Nihil Obstat:

F. THOMAS BERGH, O.S.B.,
CENSOR DEPUTATUS.

Imprimatur:

EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
VIC. GEN.

WESTMONASTERII,
Die 4 *Aprilii*, 1920.

Dorothy Cleaveland

108796

BT
402
.V37
1922

193

FOREWORD

I WELCOME the work which Father Vassall-Phillips has written at the invitation of his religious superiors. His already long career as a member of one of the best known and most zealous of the many religious Institutes which give themselves to the preaching of missions has fitted him to write of the teaching of the Catholic Church with a power and directness that only a long experience can give. He is at home in all the points of controversy that have to be met in this country, which has to so large an extent forgotten the need of doctrinal unity in religious matters. His work as a military chaplain during the recent war, by leading him to Eastern fields of action, has extended his knowledge and grasp of the Oriental traditions of Christianity. He comes, therefore, to his task exceptionally prepared, and with an equipment specially adapted to the work that he has chosen.

His task is one which appeals to the heart of every fervent priest, and finds a response in every faithful

Catholic soul—to set forth in the light of Christian teaching, history and practice, the place, the honour and the unique prerogatives of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of her who is the mother of God Incarnate, and our mother too in that spiritual generation, of which we became the heirs in baptism.

The task has, I think, been well accomplished, and many will be grateful for the accomplishment. The clergy in the first place, for they will find ready to hand sound matter for fruitful development when they are called upon to set forth that subject of which they need never tire—the praise and love and intercession of Mary Immaculate. Next, those who strive to keep alive the fire of their supernatural existence by regular spiritual reading will not be slow in recognising the debt which they owe to Father Vassall-Phillips. The old thoughts, often dwelt upon, will give forth a new enlightenment under his guidance; and new points of view hitherto unsuspected will present themselves to their gaze. Lastly, there is no one with any care for or interest in the unbroken tradition of Christianity, whether he accept or reject the authority of the Church in union with the Apostolic See, but will be glad to see the teaching of that Church so clearly established on foundations built from the beginning.

I beg God to bless and reward the author for his labours. May they bear the fruit for which he has toiled, and by bringing men in ever-growing love to the feet of the Blessed Virgin, lead them to that close and intimate union with her Divine Son, which is the one and only object of the existence, teaching, organisation and unwearied striving of God's Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE.
Archbishop of Westminster.

FEAST OF ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY.
1919.

PREFACE

SAINTS and Doctors of the Church have expressed their inability to write worthily of the great Mother of God. It will, therefore, be readily understood that when the Provincial of the English Province of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer suggested to me that I might publish an English book on our Lady, my first feeling was one of shrinking from the task.

"Whoso would celebrate the Holy Virgin and Mother of God," wrote Basil of Seleucia, "will find abundant materials for praise. But I, knowing mine own weakness to be unequal to the mightiness of the reality, have for a long time refrained from very awe. For I have not my lips purified with coal from heaven, like Isaias who saw the Seraphim, nor have I, like the divine Moses, the feet of my soul bared of their covering."[1] Many another great servant of God has expressed himself after a similar fashion before writing about our Lady. How dare I, then, attempt that for which Saints have professed themselves unworthy?

---

[1] *Orat.* X.

But other thoughts rushed to my aid. I might not lightly shrink from that which came to me thus, by way of obedience. A wish from such a source should be enough. Whatever might be the subject on which one might be asked to write by one's Superiors in Religion—to wait for a direct command would be unseemly. And when the subject was the Blessed Virgin, the temptation would have been great, however strong my consciousness of my unworthiness, even had the opportunity come to me in any other manner. For it is a happiness to acknowledge that, by a special mercy of God, notwithstanding all my sins and shortcomings, I have from boyhood up always loved and trusted His Blessed Mother.

As though it were yesterday, I remember how at school one day as I read the words . . . *maria undique, et undique coelum* the same thought came to me, that the author of *A Spiritual Æneid* has told us came to him at a solemn crisis of his spiritual experiences. It is now nearly fifty years ago since it flashed upon my mind: "Mary is not everywhere, I know—but I know also that, wherever I may be, I can pray to Mary, and that from Heaven Mary will hear my prayer." This conviction, thank God, has lasted with me through life and has never failed me yet—and now, before I die, how great a privilege to be allowed to leave behind me something that will speak after my death, however inadequately, of our Lady's power and goodness.

When, then, I considered the possibility of writing about the Blessed Virgin, my heart was gladdened within me. Moreover, quite independently of considerations personal to myself, I felt that there really existed a need for a book written in the English tongue, that would set out the Marian Theology in a comprehensive and connected form. I have been unable to find such a book. We possess several admirable works that treat of one or another aspect of this Theology (notably the late Dr. Northcote's *Mary in the Gospels*), and many others that are concerned with devotion to Mary—but nothing, I think, that deals with both theology and piety, and also with the position assigned by God to His Blessed Mother in the Economy of man's Redemption and Sanctification, considered as a whole. Consequently, I put aside all hesitation and set to work.

I have had no ambition to write anything new. My chief desire has been to place before English people the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church concerning the great Mother of God as it has come down to us through the long course of the Christian ages. I can therefore imagine that one criticism of this book is likely to be that I have quoted the Fathers too freely—too often, and at too great length. My reply is easy. What I have to say is but of small interest to anybody so far as it comes from myself alone; but all who believe in historic Christianity should surely be deeply interested in that which has been written by the great Fathers of East and West —by Justin, Irenæus and Tertullian, by Ephrem the Syrian, by Origen and Cyril of Alexandria, by Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine, by Bernard of Clairvaux and Gregory the Great, the Apostle of our nation.

Cardinal Newman has told us that after he had been received into the Church, he no longer felt himself "an outcast," but went about his library looking at the volumes of the Fathers exultingly, "kissing them with delight" and saying the while to the inanimate pages "You are now mine, and I am now yours beyond any mistake!" I have had a similar feeling ever since I began to read the Fathers for myself.

There are difficulties for Catholics in the writings of antiquity, as there are difficulties in Holy Scripture. (These difficulties I have not avoided in this book.) But as to the main point there can be no doubt. Any Catholic who reads the Fathers will feel, whilst he is reading, that they are of his religion. He is in sympathy and in touch with them—their presuppositions are his; their tone of feeling—their habit of thought is something with which he is in full sympathy. He belongs to the One Family of the Faithful, to which they too belonged when they lived upon this earth—so he understands and shares their family-feeling. They have always the sense of a great supernatural Kingdom co-terminous with the world, yet not divided as are earthly sovereignties, but its several parts knit together into an indivisible unity; to be recognised in its external aspect, as a city is recognisable which is set on a hill, yet charged with unseen, interior graces for the souls of men; set up as a hierarchical polity organised for the common weal, yet dealing individually with each individual and with his particular needs; a Kingdom, in this world, it is true, yet not of this passing world, for its supreme interests concern Eternity.

Whatever may be the exact story of the development and evolution of devotion to the Mother of God, it will hardly be denied that this devotion has its roots at least, in the earliest of the Fathers, as well as in the Gospels themselves; nor can it be denied with truth that the present attitude of Catholics to our Lady is the inevitable result of the attitude and teaching of all preceding Christian centuries. There is no break, nor any chasm, between the teaching of St. Irenæus and that of St. Ambrose on Mary's sublime vocation, between the feeling of St. Ambrose about our Blessed Lady and that of St. Bernard, or between the doctrine of St. Bernard and that of St. Francis de Sales and of St. Alphonsus de' Liguori on the efficacy of the Blessed Mother's intercession with her Divine Son. This being so, the result seems to me to follow. If Christianity is to be accepted at all, it must be accepted as it has come down to us in the Church which is in direct line of descent from the great Doctors and Saints of Antiquity, and through them from the Apostles of Christ—for example, from Polycarp who listened to the teaching of the Disciple whom Jesus loved, or from Clement who, whilst men yet lived who had known the Princes of the Apostles in the flesh, ruled that Holy Roman Church, into whose bosom, in the words of Tertullian, they poured their doctrine with their blood.

It is not difficult to understand the position of a man who rejects Christianity altogether. Christianity does not appeal to the senses for its verification. Its evidences—not exclusively but in great measure—belong to the moral order. The truth of its claim to be the final Revelation made to His reasonable creatures by their Creator, who demands a reasonable but a complete allegiance—the submission of the mind as well as the devotion of the heart—will always remain hidden from those who wilfully turn away their eyes from divine Light, refusing to pay the price that is asked for the priceless gift of Faith. Neither silver nor gold is asked of men in return for the gifts of God, but it *is* asked of them, if they would accept those gifts, that, as the condition of entrance into His Kingdom, they become as little children. To many men such a demand will in itself always constitute a stone of reproach, a scandal and a stumbling block. The Wisdom of Christ will remain to the end of time mere foolishness to all who, rather than participate in the

Wisdom that is Divine, prefer to remain wise in their own conceits. St. Bernard writes that there are, to his mind, three great mysteries—the Union of the Divine and Human Natures in the one Person of Christ, the Union of Virginity and Motherhood in our Lady, the union of faith with flesh and blood in Christians who believe that Jesus is both God and Man and that Mary is both Virgin and Mother. But too often flesh and blood refuse to listen to the Revelation offered to babes and sucklings, and from this refusal there ensues as a necessary consequence the divorce, not between faith and reason, but between the wisdom of this world and the Wisdom from on high. That some men will reject Christianity altogether is, therefore, only to be expected. God will force no man's will.

But for any private individual to accept Christianity and then to attempt to reconstruct Christianity for himself, independently of the public Tradition of the Church which is the heir of the Promises of Christ—this seems to me a futility that it is hard to reconcile with ordinary modesty, or even with sanity of vision. What can be the worth of Christianity if it has become corrupt in its main channel of transmission? Who am I that I can expect, by the exercise of my private interpretations, to arrive at a correct judgment on matters of faith concerning which I do not shrink from asserting that Saints and Doctors of the Church have gone astray, and that the *Cathedra Petri* itself has been at fault? Christianity separated from authority must always remain a mere sentiment, subject to the moods and fluctuations of opinion to which sentiment is ever liable. Nebulous and evanescent in its essence, based upon the shifting quicksands of perhaps and peradventure, it is doomed sooner or later to vanish and disappear. This fact is enforced by the lessons of history. Sectional fashions in religion pass in a long procession one after another, like the seasons or the winds. Some are passing away before our eyes. Catholic Christianity persists like the Rock upon which it has been built, and the gates of Hell shall never prevail against it.

To words once used by St. Augustine: "*In fide Catholica nutritis loquor, vel in pacem Catholicam lucratis*,"[1] I would venture to add the words *et lucrandis*. I have written this book principally "for those who have from childhood been nourished in the Catholic Faith, or have already been won [or are yet to be won] to the Catholic Unity." To any man who has definitely rejected Christianity, or who does not believe in the Holy Scriptures, or who regards the statements of the Creeds as outworn and out of date—as mere fables—this book will be meaningless and even unintelligible. But I offer it to all who believe that our Lord Jesus Christ is their Lord and their God. To all such the Catholic teaching concerning the Holy Mother of Christ, which I have endeavoured to present, should have a message to which they will do well to listen with attention. The message will differ *per accidens*, as it comes either as a familiar voice to those who have already been gathered into "the Catholic Unity," or with some sense of strangeness to those who are yet without—but Catholic doctrine has its own meaning for all Christians who have ears wherewith to hear. Differ though it may in its exact import, according to the degree of spiritual advancement to which each one may have attained, substantially it is the same for all. Jesus is God. Mary is His Mother. The Church points out to those who will hearken to her teaching the consequences that flow from these two sublime truths, so closely connected as they are in the Gospel which God, in His goodness, has revealed to mankind for the healing of the wounds of His people.

---

[1] *De Verbis Apostoli*, Serm. VIII.

I am well aware that my arrangement of the chapters in this book is open to criticism. It seemed to me, however, on the whole, after much consideration, to be the best adapted to my purpose of surveying the whole field. Therefore, I finally adopted it, though with much hesitation. Any division of the book into Parts I found to be impossible. Dogma, Scripture, history, devotion all run into one another, so that no hard and fast division is practicable. Indeed I regret to say that I have been unable to avoid some overlapping. I have looked at our Blessed Lady from many different points of view, but one always comes back soon to the central fact of her Motherhood. Moreover, the same illustrations—especially those that are drawn from the Mysteries of the Visitation and the miracle at Cana—were found to be indispensable in more than one connection, if various aspects of the Blessed Virgin's position in Revelation were to be presented to my readers with any degree of completeness.

I trust that I may be forgiven if here and there I have written as though I was not writing at all, but preaching a sermon. Preaching has for so many years been my chief occupation that even with a pen in my hand I have slipped unconsciously into the habit of, as it were, speaking to an audience; however, when, on reading over what I had written, I awoke to the fact that occasionally I had been preaching, I resolved to trust to the indulgence of my readers and let it stand. If my words are read by any after I am dead, I shall in this book continue to preach about our Lady, and to preach about our Lady has been the delight, the joy, and the consolation of my life. So it will, after all, be as I would wish—as with all my heart I would have it come to pass when my lips are closed and unable even to whisper our Lady's Blessed Name.

I must express my obligation to *The Blessed Virgin in the First Six Centuries* by the late Fr. Livius. Often I have adopted Fr. Livius' translations as they stand, since I found, when comparing them with the original, that I could in no way improve upon them; the quotations from St. Ephrem's Syriac I have taken, as he took them, from the English translation of the late Rev. J. B. Morris, and the Latin translation by the late Canon Lamy of Louvain. In the case of St. Ephrem no further verification was possible for me, but I do not think that any further verification is necessary. The renderings of Lamy and Fr. Morris have never been challenged. The references to other patristic quotations are, almost without exception, to the Edition by Migne. As I am aware that to many of my readers the names of even the greatest of the Fathers will mean nothing of themselves, I have supplied an Index in which I have given the name of every Father from whose works I have quoted, with a bare statement as to when and where he lived. Unfortunately, I have been precluded from giving further information by the exigencies of space.

I plead guilty to inconsistency with regard to orthography. For the most part I have spelt Old Testament Names as they are to be found in the Vulgate. It seemed to me, however, that it would be tiresome pedantry to ignore the fact that such a form as Nebuchadnezzar has passed into our language; whilst to write Nabucodonosor would have made myself unintelligible to many of my readers. So in certain cases I have adopted the nomenclature which is familiar to all English people. But it is a very small matter, of no real importance either way.

It is a pleasure to thank His Eminence Cardinal Bourne for his kind words of introduction, and Mrs. Meynell for the exquisite verses which supply the keynote to thoughts to which I have endeavoured to give expression in inadequate prose.

Finally, I ask St. Alphonsus to bless this book and all its readers. Under the protection of this great Saint I place my small effort to increase devotion to our Blessed Lady. I have endeavoured to write—as I think that he would have written had he lived in our times in England—according to his spirit which is the spirit of the Church—the spirit of unstinted veneration combined with the most tender love of the great Mother of God, who is also our Mother and our Queen—after her Son the chief hope of sin-laden men. To spread abroad the glories of Mary was one great desire of my holy Father Alphonsus when he lived on earth; from his throne in heaven, may he intercede with God that English hearts may once more glow with that devotion which bestowed of old upon our country the proud title of our Lady's Dower.

O. R. VASSALL-PHILLIPS, C.SS.R.

CONTENTS

PAGES
FOREWORD - - - - - - v-vii

PREFACE - - - - - - ix-xx

CHAPTER I

MARY'S LIFE ON EARTH - - - - 1-22

Our Lady's Birth. Her birth-place. Her father and mother. Her Name. Its signification. Our Lady's Presentation in the Temple. Her Vow of Virginity. Her Spouse. The Holy Family at Nazareth. Our Lady's life after the Resurrection. Our Lady Queen of the Apostles.

CHAPTER II

MARY CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN - - - 23-48

Original Sin. The Second Adam and the Second Eve. The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. St. Bernard's letter to the Canons of Lyons. Testimony of the three great Patriarchates to the fact that Mary co-operated in our redemption, as Eve had co-operated in our undoing. The Patriarchate of Rome. The Patriarchate of Antioch. The Patriarchate of Alexandria. The words of St. Jerome: "Death by Eve: Life by Mary." The Teaching of St. Ephrem the Syrian. Witness of the Christian Tradition concerning the Immaculate Conception. Reasonableness and antecedent verisimilitude of the doctrine. Its practical bearing on life.

CHAPTER III

PAGES
MARY, VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD - - - 49–72

The Catholic Doctrine of the Incarnation. Basil of Seleucia on the Mystery of the Mother of God. The Virgin-Mother. Helvidian denial of our Lady's Virginity. St. Jerome and St. Epiphanius on this heresy. Its revival in our times. Dr. Sanday and the Modern Mind. Bishop Pearson on the Ever-Virginity of our Lady. The Holy Mother of God. Our Lady's two-fold Blessedness. St. Augustine on the Bearing of Christ.

CHAPTER IV

MARY, MOTHER OF CHRISTIANS - - - 73–91

Our Lady the Mother of the brothers and sisters of her Son, and of the Members of His Body. The Gift from the Cross. The Seven Words of Christ upon the Cross reach forward into the future, and have a mystic as well as an immediate signification. A Mother's Love.

CHAPTER V

MARY, THE MOTHER OF THE MAN OF SORROWS - 92–102

The Passion of Jesus and the Compassion of Mary. The sorrows of life. The Love of God proved by the Sufferings of Christ. The sufferings of Christians. The "filling up of those things which are wanting in the Sufferings of Christ." The Sufferings of the Saints. The Sufferings of the Mother of God.

CHAPTER VI

MARY'S SORROWS - - - - - 103-129

The Seven Sorrows. Simeon's Prophecy. The Flight into Egypt. The Three Days' Loss. The Meeting on the Way to Calvary. The Crucifixion. The Deposition. The Entombment.

CHAPTER VII

PAGES
MARY'S JOYS - - - - - - 130–154

Old English Devotion to Mary's Joys. The Annunciation. The Visitation. The Birth of our Lord. The Visit of the Magi. The Finding in the Temple. The Resurrection. The Assumption.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SINLESSNESS OF MARY - - - - 155–171

The Council of Trent on Mary's sinlessness. Difficulties from writings of some Greek Fathers. The ceremony of *Tenebræ*. Letter of St. Paulinus to St. Augustine on the sword foretold by Simeon. Temptations and our Lady. Worldwide consent concerning the absolute sinlessness of Mary.

CHAPTER IX

MARY'S VIRTUES - - - - - 172–203

Our Lady a model of all virtues. The House with seven columns built for Himself by the Eternal Wisdom. Mary's Faith, her Hope, her Humility, her Purity, her Prayer, her Love of God and man.

CHAPTER X

MARY AT CANA - - - - - - 204–229

The Wedding Feast at Cana. Our Lord is present with His disciples. His Mother is also there. Circumstances of the miracle. True meaning of the words of Christ to His Mother. Parallel passages. Various patristic explanations. Significance of the fact that St. John alone amongst the Evangelists

records this miracle. Was the record due to the connection of this miracle with marriage, or to its bearing on the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, or to the part played therein by our Lady?

CHAPTER XI

PAGES

MARY DURING THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST - 230–249

Nature of the Public Ministry. Our Lady had no place in it as such. "He that doeth the Will of My Father in Heaven, he is My brother and My sister and My mother." "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." George Herbert and John Keble on lawfulness of prayer to the Blessed Virgin. Catholic principles on this subject.

CHAPTER XII

MARY'S WORDS - - - - - - 250–272

Mary's silences. Seven words of Mary recorded in the Gospels. How shall this be done, because I know not man? Behold the Handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to Thy Word. My soul doth magnify the Lord. Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed. Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. They have no wine. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do ye.

CHAPTER XIII

MARY'S DEATH AND GLORIOUS ASSUMPTION - - 273–292

Why our Lady died. The Assumption an anticipated Resurrection of the body. No corporal Relics of our Lady in existence. The Liturgy and the Assumption. Gospel of the Feast. Is the Assumption, like the Immaculate Conception, a unique Privilege of our Lady? St. John Damascene and the Assumption.

CHAPTER XIV

PAGES
MARY OUR ADVOCATE - - - - - 293-313
The Communion of Saints. The Mediation of the Saints. The Mediation of Mary. Our Lady's Office as Mother of Christ and as Mother of the Redeemed. The Omnipotence of Prayer. Imperfections in our prayers. Perfection of our Lady's Prayer. God will hear His Mother's petitions. Our Mother will hear her children. St. Bernard on the Sinner's Ladder.

CHAPTER XV

MARY MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE - - - 314-335
Our Lady's Universal Intercession. Certain Analogies. Teaching of St. Bernard. The Traditions of the Greek Catholics. Testimony of the Greek Liturgy and Office Books.

CHAPTER XVI

MARY PREFIGURED IN WOMEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT - - - - - 336-362
Eve. Sara. Rebecca. Rachel. Miriam. Debbora. Jael. Ruth. Abigail. Bethsabee. Judith. Esther.

CHAPTER XVII

MARY AND THE CHURCH IN TYPE AND PROPHECY - 363-388
Identification of our Lady and the Church by the Fathers. The Canticle of Canticles. The Virginal Soil in the Paradise of Eden. The Thirsty Ground. The Burning Bush. Gideon's Fleece. The Cloud. The Ark of the Covenant. The Eastern Gate. The Ark of Noah. The Mountain on the Top of Mountains. St. John's Vision of the Woman who gave birth to the Man-Child.

CHAPTER XVIII

PAGES
Mary and Ephesus - - - - - - 389–401

"Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The Temple of Diana. The Church of the Mother of God at Ephesus. The Council of Ephesus. St. Cyril of Alexandria. The condemnation of Nestorius. The Theotokos.

CHAPTER XIX

Images of Mary - - - - - - 402–418

The Veneration of Holy Images. The Fathers of the Desert. St. Mary of Egypt and the Picture of our Lady at Jerusalem. Her subsequent history. Famous Images of our Lady in England before the Reformation. Horrible sacrileges at the Change of Religion. Some calumnies. Our Lady of Aberdeen. Our Lady of Perpetual Succour.

CHAPTER XX

Development of Devotion to Mary 419–441

St. Vincent of Lerins on Development. Extent of such Development with regard to our Lady. The basic truths that our Lady is the Second Eve and the Mother of God. The witness of the Council of Ephesus to the Antiquity of the title Theotokos. Still, truths concerning the Blessed Virgin are secondary; they had to wait on the primary truths concerning our Lord. Jewish and Gentile converts to Christianity in the first ages had their special difficulties with regard to the position of our Lady, to which the Church was alive. The Collyridians. St. Ephrem and devotion to our Lady. Great devotion of Christians in times of the early persecutions to the Martyrs. Devotion to Patron Saints—for example, that of St. Paulinus to St. Felix and of the Curé d'Ars

to St. Philomena. Influence of St. Bernard and St. Anselm on devotion to our Lady. Development of devotion to our Lady coincident with that to the Sacred Humanity of her Divine Son.

CHAPTER XXI

PAGES
VISIONS AND MIRACLES OF MARY - - - 442–481

Principles concerning Apparitions in general. The great Gregories and miraculous visions of our Lady. Vision granted to St. Gregory Thaumaturgus and recorded by St. Gregory of Nyssa. Sozomen on Apparitions of our Lady. St. Gregory Nazianzen recounts the answer to St. Justinia's prayer to our Lady. St. Gregory of Tours on the miraculous protection afforded by our Lady to a Jewish boy. St. Gregory the Great recounts an Apparition of our Lady. Five Apparitions of our Lady in the nineteenth century. Sister Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal. Conversion of M. Alphonse Ratisbonne. La Salette. Lourdes. Pontmain. Pellevoisin. Our Lady and France.

CHAPTER XXII

THE NATURE OF TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY - 482–505

Devotion to our Lady consists of Honour, Prayer, and Imitation. The Honour springs from Faith, Prayer from Hope, Imitation from Love. Is there danger of excess in Honour paid to Mary ? Various devotions to our Lady. The Rosary. Invocation of our Lady in time of temptation. Devotion recommended by Blessed Grignon de Montfort. A wish to imitate the virtues of our Lady essential to true devotion. External practices worthless without some desire to lead a good life. But those who sin through weakness should persevere in prayer to our Lady and never despair.

CHAPTER XXIII

PAGES
EXCELLENCE OF DEVOTION TO MARY - - 506-518

Contrast between position of women in Christian and Mahommedan lands—due to devotion to our Lady. Influence of devotion to our Lady on the common life of English people before the Reformation—and upon the individual in every age. Our Lady, the Morning Star, heralds within our souls the rising of the Sun of Justice. Where there is still devotion to our Lady there is always hope. Our Lady leads men to God. She is the Cause of our Joy. Comfort of devotion to our Lady at the hour of our death and through Eternity.

INDEX I. - - - - - - 519-520

INDEX II. - - - - - - 521-524

THE MOTHER OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

MARY'S LIFE ON EARTH

Mary's Song

While I was yet a little one
  I pleased the Lord of Grace ;
And in His holy sanctuary
  He granted me a place.
There, sheltered by His tender care,
  And by His love inspired,
I strove in all things to fulfil
  Whatever He desired.
I wholly gave myself to Him,
  To be for ever His ;
I meditated on His Law
  And ancient Promises ;
And oft at my embroidery,
  Musing upon the Maid
Of whom Messias should be born—
  Thus in my heart I prayed :
" Permit me, Lord, one day to see
  That Virgin ever dear,
Predestinated in the Courts
  Of Sion to appear.
Oh, blest estate, if but I might
  Among her handmaids be

But such a favour, O my God,
Is far too high for me."
Thus unto God I poured my prayer,
And He that prayer fulfilled,
Not as my poverty had hoped,
But as His bounty willed.
Erewhile, a trembling child of dust,
Now, robed in heavenly rays,
I reign the Mother of my God
Through sempiternal days:
To me the nations of the world
Their grateful tribute bring;
To me the powers of darkness bend;
To me the Angels sing!

Father Caswall, C.O.

Our Lady's Birth.

At the birth of Mary of Nazareth the Angels of God sang in jubilee. Redemption was nigh at hand for the children of men, long lost and gone astray, but entrusted still to the Angels' keeping.

The holy Angels sang rejoicing. Their Queen—the Maiden chosen from Eternity that she might minister to the Human Nature of their Lord and King—was upon the earth. Soon, they will surround His Cradle too, heralding the good tidings of Salvation, adoring Mary's Son.

> "Of none of the Angels layeth He hold at any time, but of the seed of Abraham He layeth hold. And when He bringeth His First-begotten into the world He saith: Let all the Angels of God adore Him."[1]

---

[1] Heb. ii. 16; i. 6.

In these words we may find the supreme cause of joy both for Angels and for men; the beginning of this joy was the Nativity of our Blessed Lady.

According to the Little Bollandists, the Holy Mother of God was born amidst the mountains of Judaea; others think that her birth took place at Nazareth, her future home, not far from Mount Carmel. By far the most probable opinion, however, is that of St. John Damascene, who spent a great deal of his life in the Laura (or Monastery) of St. Saba, not many hours' distant from the Holy City, and is an excellent witness to the Christian traditions of Jerusalem. He tells us that the Holy Virgin saw the light in her father's house at "the Probatica" in Jerusalem.[1] This Probatica is the Pool of which we read in the Gospel, where our Lord healed the paralytic.[2]

There is still in existence a grotto that probably formed a part of the house in which our Lady was born. On its site was built in the fourth or fifth century a Byzantine Basilica, where St. John Damascene preached two sermons on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. Discoveries made as recently as 1914 have proved that the *atrium* of this Basilica, called in the days of St. John Damascene the Church of our Lady's Nativity, stood over the portico leading to the Probatica. The ancient Basilica was several times destroyed and several times restored. The present church, built, like its predecessor, upon the traditional site of our Lady's birth, is dedicated to her holy mother, and is served by the "White Fathers," a congregation of priests founded by the late Cardinal Lavigerie. Their house, adjoining the church, is called "the House of the Probatica," in consequence of its vicinity to the Gospel well, from which it is only separated by the width of a street.

---

[1] *De Fide Orthodoxa,* iv. 15.

[2] The Probatica was named from the Greek προόβατον (meaning *sheep*)—probably because it was in this well, situated very near the Temple, that the sheep were washed before being offered in the sacrifices. It is translated in the A.V. (John v. 2) "by the sheep market," a most unlikely rendering. The R.V. has "by the sheep gate." The Douay version wisely leaves it untranslated.

Our Lady's Parents.

Our Lady's father was named Heli or Joachim[1]—meaning *Expectation*, her mother Hannah or Anne, which signifies *Grace*. Gracious, assuredly, in the eyes of God was she whose daughter is the Ever-Blessed Virgin, hailed by the Angel as herself "Full of grace"—the destined Mother of God.

---

[1] The Arabs know St. Joachim by the name of Imram or Amram— the father of another Mary, the sister of Moses (see Koran, Sura III. "The Family of Imram"). On this subject Mr. Rodwell writes (the Koran, translated from the Arabic, in Everyman's Library, by Rev. J. M. Rodwell, p. 385): "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Muhammed is guilty of confounding Miriam with the Virgin Mary. On the other hand is the difficulty of conceiving that, as the sequence of time and fact is observed [in the Koran] with tolerable accuracy in regard to the main features of Jewish and Christian

An ancient tradition tells us that Joachim and Anne had long been childless and that their only child was given to them in answer to fervent, long-continued prayer. St. Justin, who was born in Samaria A.D. 100, and was well acquainted with the traditions of Palestine, writes that our Lady was of royal stock, descending in a direct line of ancestry from King David, whilst St. Augustine informs us that: "One of David's sons, according to custom, married a wife from the sacerdotal line. Hence Mary belonged to both tribes and had her descent both in the royal and sacerdotal lines."[1]

Our Lady's Name.

It was usual amongst the Jews to name their children the ninth day after birth, in the midst of the assembled family. St. Joachim bestowed upon his daughter the name of Miriam—a name of Egyptian origin—in Greek and Latin Maria, which signifies both *Sovereign Lady* or *Princess*, and *Sea of Sorrows*. It, as we shall see, has received various other interpretations.

An ancient writer, whose works are to be found amongst those of St. Epiphanius, writes as follows:

---

history, he should have fallen into so considerable an error . . . as to have overlooked the discrepancy in their respective dates. But it is possible that Muhammed believed that, as some Muslim writers assert, Miriam's soul and body were miraculously preserved till the time of Jesus, to become Mary His Mother." It is very curious to find that Miriam was mystically identified with Mary by St. Jerome (*Ep. ad Eustoch. Cf.* p. 341).

[1] *De diversis quaest.*, Lib. I. lxi. 2.

"From the root of Jesse sprung King David and from the family of King David the holy Virgin—holy I say and the daughter of holy men. Her parents were Joachim and Anne, who pleased God in their life, and bore fruit also pleasing to Him—even the holy Virgin Mary, at once the Temple and the Mother of God. These three, moreover, Joachim, Anne and Mary, offered to the Trinity a sacrifice of praise. For Joachim is interpreted *the Preparation of the Lord*, since it was from him that the Temple of the Lord was prepared, even the Virgin. Anne is interpreted *Grace*, because Joachim and Anne received grace, after having prayed, to bear such fruit, by obtaining the holy Virgin. For whilst Joachim prayed on the mountain, Anne prayed in her garden. Anne then conceived and gave birth to Heaven and the Throne of the Cherubim, the holy child Mary. For she will be found to be Heaven, a Temple and a Throne, since she, whose name of Mary we are wont to interpret *Lady* and also *Hope*, gave birth to the Lord—who is the Hope of the whole world—that is, to Christ. Again, this Name of Mary is interpreted *Myrrh of the Sea*. By myrrh may be understood—and this is my opinion—immortality, since she was to bring forth the immortal Pearl in the sea—that is, in the world. Moreover, the Virgin brought serenity and calm to the sea, that is to the whole world, by giving birth to Christ, who is a Haven of rest. The Blessed Name of the Glorious Virgin Mary is also interpreted, *She who is full of light*, since she was illumined by the Son of God and has enlightened all who believe in the Trinity, even to the ends of the earth."[1]

---

[1] *Oratio* v. *In laudes S. M. Deiparae* inter opp. S. Epiphanii.

And St. Peter Chrysologus:

> "The Angel treats with Mary about man's salvation, because an Angel had treated with Eve about his ruin. . . . '*Fear not, Mary.*' Before the mystery is accomplished, the Virgin's dignity is announced by her Name. For Miriam in the Hebrew tongue, in Latin is *Domina* or *Lady.* The Angel, therefore, calls her Lady, that all trepidation of servitude may leave the Mother of the Lord."[1]

On the words of the Gospel, "The Virgin's Name was Mary," St. Bernard writes as follows:

> "Let me speak a few words upon this Name, which, being interpreted, means *Star of the Sea,* and marvellously fits the Maiden-Mother. For most fitly may she be likened unto a star. A star sends forth its ray without any harm to itself; and the Virgin brought forth her Son without any hurt to her virginity. Neither does the ray lessen the brightness of the stars, nor does her Son lessen the inviolateness of the Virgin. She, then, was that noble Star, which has risen out of Jacob, whose ray enlightened the whole world, whose glory both shines in the heavens and reaches to those that dwell below, for it sheds its light throughout all lands, and, giving warmth to the mind rather than to the body, nourishes virtues and destroys vices. She, I say, is the most illustrious and splendid Star, raised over the vast deeps of the mighty ocean, shining by her merits, guiding us by her example. O thou, whoever thou art, that knowest thyself to be here below not so much walking upon firm ground, as tossed to and fro by the gales and storms of this

---

[1] *Serm.* cxlii. *De Annuntiatione B.V.M.*

> life's ocean, if thou wouldest not be overwhelmed by the tempest, keep thine eyes fixed upon this Star's clear shining. Should the winds of temptation assail thee, shouldst thou encounter the rocks of tribulations, look upon the Star, call upon Mary."[1]

The Virgin, then, received the Blessed Name of Mary.

The Hidden Life of Mary.

In considering the external life of our Lady we must be reconciled to the fact that we know very little of its tenor. For the most part it is hidden from our view.

And of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is true also of the Life of our Lord Himself. At first sight we shall, perhaps, be astonished to see how few are the details of the Life of Christ recorded in the Gospels. Apart from what we are told of His preaching, of His parables, of His public miracles, the events—so to speak—in the Redeemer's sojourn upon the earth can be mentioned in a few lines. He was born at Bethlehem, was circumcised and presented in the Temple, fled into Egypt, returned to Palestine, disputed with the Doctors in Jerusalem, lived at Nazareth subject to Mary and Joseph, engaged in the Public Ministry, ate the Passover for the last time with His Apostles, instituted the Holy Eucharist, was betrayed, suffered the ignominies of His Passion and died. During forty days He appeared in His Risen Body on various occasions to

---

[1] *Homilia* ii. 17, *super Missus est.*

His Apostles, "speaking to them of the Kingdom of God." He committed His sheep and lambs to the pastoral care of Blessed Peter. He ascended into Heaven. How extraordinarily little it appears in bulk!

Of set purpose, then, our minds should be concentrated, when we think of the lives of Jesus and Mary, not so much on their outward circumstances, as on the lessons which they inculcate, and the supernatural Mysteries which they enshrine. This is suggested to us by the reserve of the Evangelists. It has been written for our instruction that the beauty of the King's daughter is within. Of Mary's life it is pre-eminently true that it was hidden with Christ in God.

We shall be wise, therefore, if, as a general rule, we confine ourselves to the few facts that have been told us expressly in Holy Scripture concerning the lives of our Lord and His Blessed Mother, without desiring to wander further afield. Above all, we should be on our guard against attaching any importance to the fanciful, and often grotesque, details to be found in much profusion in the Apocryphal Gospels.

There is, however, one fact in our Lady's early life of which, though it is not recorded in the authentic Gospels, we may be certain, since it is commemorated in the Church's Liturgy.

The Festival of the Presentation of the Blessed

Virgin as a child in the Temple—of comparatively recent introduction in the West—was observed from a very early age throughout the Christian East. The ancient tradition tells us that Joachim and Anne introduced Mary at the age of three to the Temple and left her there to be dedicated in a special manner to the Lord.

Mary's Presentation.

I will translate the short passage from St. John Damascene read at Matins on the Feast:

> "Joachim was united in matrimony to the chosen Anne, a woman worthy of the highest praise. Now, even as Anna of the Old Testament, when she was stricken with barrenness, gave birth to Samuel as the fruit of Prayer and Promise, in like manner the second Anna received from God the Mother of God promised to her entreaties, so that in fruitfulness she had not to yield to any of the illustrious matrons who had gone before her. Thus *Grace* (for this is the meaning of the word Anna) is mother of the *Lady* (for this is the signification of the name of Mary), who in truth was made the Lady over all created things when she became the Mother of the Creator.
>
> "The Holy Virgin first saw the light in Joachim's house hard by the Probatica (*in domo probaticae Joachim*)[1] and was brought to the Temple. There, having been planted in the House of God, and nourished by the Spirit, she was made like a fruitful olive-tree, the dwelling place of all virtues—as one who had withdrawn her mind from every desire of this life and of the flesh, and had thus preserved

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 3.

> virginity both of soul and body—as beseemed her who was to receive God in her womb."[1]

On this subject St. Gregory of Nyssa writes:

> "As soon as Mary was grown to be a little maid who no longer needed her mother's breast, holy Anne, taking her to the Temple, restored her to God."[2]

And St. Theodotus of Ancyra:

> "A Virgin was chosen who, when yet unborn, was consecrated to God her Maker, and, when born, was offered up as the memorial of a grateful heart to abide in His sanctuary and Temple."[3]

The learned Suarez proves that there was a place in the Temple at Jerusalem wherein maidens, consecrated to God, dwelt apart, and that in this house of virgins our Lady lived until her espousals to St. Joseph.[4]

St. Ephrem expresses the tradition which he had received on this subject in Syria when he puts the following words into the mouth of the Blessed Virgin:

> "Whilst I was yet a little child, the priests of the people brought me up in the holy Temple; when I became a young girl they espoused me to the just Joseph."[5]

---

[1] *De Fide Orthodoxa*, iv. 15.

[2] *Orat. in Nat. D. N. J. C.*

[3] *Hom.* vi. 11 *in S. Deiparam et in Nativit. Dom.*

[4] Pars iii. 2, 29, Art. 2, Disp. 7.

[5] Hymns on the B.V.M. xvi. 7; Lamy, vol. ii. p. 640.

Both the Apocryphal Gospels and the Koran bear witness to the tradition of the Presentation in the Temple. With regard to the Apocryphal Gospels, it should be borne in mind that, though we should be careful not to accept any statement on the sole authority of these books (often tainted as heretical in their source), still, there is no doubt that in some respects they bear trustworthy witness to the Christian Tradition. Mr. Rodwell thinks that Muhammed had no direct access to these "Gospels," but derived the following passage in the Koran from "the ordinary traditions of South Syria" at the time[1]:

> "Remember when the wife of Imram said: 'O my Lord! I vow to Thee what is in my womb for Thy special service. Accept it from me, for Thou Hearest, Knowest.' And when she had given birth to it, she said: 'O! my Lord, verily I have brought forth a female.' (God knew what she had brought forth; a male is not as a female.)[2] 'And I have named her Mary, and I take refuge with Thee for her and for her Offspring, from Satan the stoned.'[3] So with goodly acceptance did her Lord accept her and with goodly growth did He make her grow. Zacharias reared her [this was an old tradition]. So oft as Zacharias went in to Mary at the sanctuary, he

---

[1] The Koran (Everyman's Library Edition), p. 389, Note 1.

[2] That is, a female child could not become a priest (Id. Note 2).

[3] According to the Mohammedan tradition, Abraham drove Satan away with stones.

> found her supplied with food.[1] 'O Mary,' said he, 'whence hast thou this?' She said: 'It is from God, for God supplieth whom He will, without reckoning.'"[2]

The holy child Mary, during her stay in the Temple, no doubt devoted herself, together with the other maidens who were her companions within its precincts, to such occupations as the making of tapestry and spinning,[3] the study of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Covenant, and prayer.

Our Lady's Vow of Virginity.

That our Blessed Lady made a vow of Virginity is not a matter of Faith. But neither is it a matter of controversy amongst Catholics.[4] It is a subject on which all Catholics are agreed. St. Augustine writes that on any other supposition it would be impossible to explain her answer to the Angel:

> "'How,' she said, 'shall this be done because I know not man?' For she surely would not have spoken thus, unless she had already vowed herself as a virgin to God. But because the customs of the Israelites were as yet opposed to this, she was

---

[1] No importance should be attached to the story of our Lady being fed miraculously by angels in the Temple, which is to be found in the Apocryphal Gospels. I only quote it here because it seems interesting to find it also in the Koran.

[2] Sura iii. ("The Family of Imram"), 31-33.

[3] In the Middle Ages the weavers claimed the right to place themselves and their craft in a special manner under the protection of our Lady, in memory of her occupations, whilst living in the Temple.

[4] *Cf.* Suarez, iii., p. 9; xxviii., Art. iv.

> espoused to a just man who, far from seeking violently to take away, would on the contrary most jealously guard against all who would violate it, that which she had already vowed."[1]

Pope Benedict XIV. holds that the Blessed Virgin made her vow whilst still dwelling within the Temple; St. Thomas Aquinas, however, thinks it probable that the vow was made after her marriage, in conjunction with a vow to the same effect made by St. Joseph, but certainly before the Annunciation.

Our Lady's Espousals.

Tradition tells us that our Lady was fifteen years of age when she was espoused to Joseph—a humble artizan, who belonged to the tribe of Juda, and the race of David. The Fathers of the Church insist upon the reasons of prudence which made it necessary for the Most Holy Mother of God not only to be espoused, but also to be joined, in virgin marriage, with a man chosen by God as the guardian of her virginity as well as of her good name before the world.

Thus, St. Augustine writes:

> "Mary had made a fixed purpose of virginity, and her husband, so far from detracting from her chastity, was its guardian. Or rather, since God was its guardian, her husband was a witness to her virginal purity—lest she might have been thought to have conceived through sin."[2]

And again:

---

[1] *De Sancta Virgin.* iv. *Cf. Serm.* 291, v. 4, 6; 287, 4; 293, 1.

[2] *Serm.* CCXXV. 2.

> "The Virgin was espoused, that Joseph might himself take care of the Infant, whether going to Egypt, or returning thence."[1]

Origen gives yet another reason:

> "Hence it has been admirably said, as I have found in the Epistle of a certain martyr, I mean Ignatius, the second Bishop of Antioch after Peter, who in the persecution fought with beasts at Rome: The Virginity of Mary was hidden from the Prince of this world. It was hidden in consequence of Joseph. It was hidden by reason of the nuptials. It was hidden because she was supposed to have a husband. . . . Look too in another Scripture, and you will find that it was Christ's will that the Devil should know not of the coming of the Son of God. For the Apostle when affirming that the Powers of wickedness were ignorant of His Passion says: 'We speak wisdom among "the Perfect." But not the wisdom of this world; nor of the princes of this world who come to nought: but we speak the Wisdom of God hidden in Mystery, which none of the princes of this world knew. For, if they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory. Hence the Mystery of the Saviour was hidden from the princes of this world . . . so much as to why Mary had a spouse."[2]

Joseph the Husband of Mary.

Origen here writes because "she was supposed to have a husband." Catholics understand the sense in which these words may be rightly used; yet we must always remember that there was a real marriage between

---

[1] *Ap. Morales,* ii. 1.

[2] *In Luc. Hom.* vi.

Mary and Joseph, and that therefore in a real and true sense Joseph is called the husband of Mary.

St. Augustine reminds his readers that:

> "All good things pertaining to marriage were found in that of Christ's Parents, offspring, fidelity, and a sacrament."[1]

By the public espousals of our Lady with St. Joseph, the way was smoothed for the Incarnation. From the moment that the Blessed Virgin became the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, her life was merged in that of her Divine Son. For Him she lived and moved and had her being. First there was the wondrous Mystery of the Expectation. Mary waited for nine months until she should see the Human Features of her Creator, who was also her Child. At length Jesus was born at Bethlehem. To His Mother it belonged to minister to the needs of His Infancy. With Him and Joseph she journeyed to Egypt, with Him and Joseph she returned. At Nazareth the Holy Family lived together for eighteen years, Joseph working at his trade, Mary devoting herself to the work of the house. Of Jesus all that we are told is that He was "subject" to them—that is to say, He helped His foster-Father and His Mother, doing their bidding.

The thought of God submitting Himself to earthly conditions has filled the Saints with awe. The sight of the Word Incarnate in the House of Nazareth, employed silently in manual labour, is an epitome of the Divine Condescension, such as to compel all reflecting Christians to wondering adoration. Our Lord came to set us a perfect example. From the age of twelve to that of thirty His example was an exhibition of submission—even of subjection—of work—of the Hidden Life. But after all has been said, the chief Mystery in the Humiliation of the Eternal Word is the central fact that He became Man. When we have once grasped this, everything else is seen to be of minor importance. If He shrouded His glory and took the form of Man, it is a secondary (though a very wonderful) consideration that He took the form of a slave. The condition of the imperial Cæsar is as immeasurably beneath the Majesty of God, as is the condition of a helot—for in both cases the distance is infinite. Both the Cæsar and the helot are creatures. The Lord Christ is the Creator. No earthly trappings can conceivably confer upon Him any adventitious dignity. In the case of His Mother the case is altogether different. Like the Cæsar and the helot, she is a creature. But she is the Mother of God, and as such is throned in the Kingdom of her Son, high above all creation.

---

[1] *De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*, LI. xxi.

The Holy Family at Nazareth.

At first sight, therefore, we might certainly have anticipated that much state and dignity would have been allotted to God's great Mother during some portion, at least, of her life upon the earth. How different was the reality, as arranged by the Providence of God. We find Mary in her poor dwelling discharging such homely duties as sweeping the floor, washing the linen, cooking the food, going to and fro to the well with a pitcher on her head—as those who have visited the East have so often watched the women of the people at the present day, fetching water for the daily needs of their household—engaged in that kind of work which we, in face of the example set by Jesus, Mary and Joseph, venture to call menial. Mary's hands were doubtless reddened and hardened by toil, she was often weary and overworked; hers were the anxieties of a working man's wife. This is all that we know of our Lady's life at Nazareth. Surely it is enough. We see how mistaken were those first anticipations as to earthly glory being conferred on the Mother of Christ; thus early are we taught the great lesson that the Holy Mother of God must share in all things, so far as a creature might, the humiliations, the obscurity, the hardships, the poverty, the contempt that were heaped upon her Son. Where suffering was concerned, in no way could she stand apart from Him. With His Public Life it was very different. We shall find her at Cana where Jesus worked His first miracle. But she was present at no other miracle of Christ, nor during His discourses, nor at His Triumph on the

Our Lady's poverty.

first Palm Sunday. The reason for this, so far as we may hope to understand it, we shall consider later.[1] For the moment we are concerned only with the fact.

After the death of St. Joseph, our Lady was necessarily much alone. It would seem that some

Our Lady's relations.

of her relations, for example "the brothers and sisters" of our Lord—almost certainly the children of her cousin Mary of Cleophas[2]—were not seldom in her company; it was, however, made clear that there was no close tie between them, when Christ from the Cross committed His Mother to the filial care not of any relative, but of the Disciple whom He loved.

After the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ, the same obscurity exists concerning the

Our Lady's life after the Resurrection.

life of our Blessed Lady. She was present with the Apostles and other Disciples during the Nine Days' prayer that preceded the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost. After the first Whit Sunday, all that we know of Mary, is that she made her home with St. John. Ephesus and Jerusalem dispute the honour of being the place of her death It is, however, almost certain that our Lady died in the holy city and was buried outside its walls.

Supporters of the opinion that the Blessed Virgin died at Ephesus have quoted a sentence from the letter written in A.D. 431 by the Fathers of the Third General Council to the clergy and faithful of Constantinople. This passage begins as follows: "*Nestorius came to the city of Ephesus, in which St. John and the Holy Mother of God . . .*" That which follows has been lost. It is quite gratuitous to suppose that it ran *died*, or *are buried*. Very probably the lost words were: *once dwelt*. It is generally thought that St. John conducted the Mother of God, for safety's sake, to Ephesus during the persecution that so soon broke out in Judaea against Christians, in which St. Peter was imprisoned and St. James endured martyrdom. That persecution once over, our Lady would naturally have wished to return to Jerusalem, where her Son had suffered and died.

---

[1] *Cf.* pp. 234-235.

[2] *Cf.* Matt. xiii. 55 with Matt. xxvii. 56 and Mark xv. 40.

Place of our Lady's death.

On the other hand, the evidence for the Jerusalem Tradition is very strong. It had long been in possession when first challenged by the claim of Ephesus. The ancient Liturgies all bear witness to its truth. St. Andrew of Crete had weighty authorities behind him when he wrote that our Lady died on Mount Sion, that shortly after her death her holy body was removed by the Apostles to Gethsemane, and placed in a sepulchre situated in the Valley of Josaphat.[1] As a consequence of the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, Mary's Tomb was buried beneath the ruins of the city. St. John Damascene, however, writes that in the fifth century Juvenal, then Bishop of Jerusalem, who was at Constantinople on occasion of the Council of Chalcedon, informed the Empress Pulcheria that Mary's sepulchre had been discovered, but that, after an ancient and trustworthy tradition, when the Apostles had opened it the third day after her burial, they found nothing within but the grave clothes, the holy body of the Virgin having already been assumed into Heaven.[1]

---

[1] *Hom. de Dormit. B.V.M., II.*

The traditional site of our Lady's death on Mount Sion is occupied by a church in the possession of Catholics; that of her sepulchre is in the hands of schismatic Greeks.

Our Lady's age at her death.

For the first fifteen years of her life, Mary was being prepared by God for the coming of Christ as her Son. The next thirty years she passed, almost uninterruptedly, in His company, by His side at Bethlehem, in Egypt and at Nazareth. There followed the three years of partial, but not complete, separation during the Public Ministry. According to an opinion mentioned by Father Faber the Blessed Virgin lived another fifteen years after the Ascension. This would give her thirty years in all spent apart from the visible Presence of Christ, to match the thirty years during which Jesus and Mary dwelt under the same roof, and would make her sixty-three years of age at the date of her death. But it is necessary to say plainly that on this subject there is no kind of certainty.

---

[1] St. John Damasc., *Hom II.*, 18. *In Dormit B.V.M.*, P.G., Tom. 96, pp. 747-752. For the Assumption *cf.* pp. 274-292.

Our Lady Queen of the Apostles.

We know only that God detained Mary Most Holy in the land of her exile, after His own departure into Heaven, not only for her yet greater sanctification, but also that she might minister to the needs of the Church still in its infancy. As the pre-elected Mother had cared for Jesus in His weakness when a Babe, so did she watch lovingly over His Mystical Body during its first years of special struggle and difficulty. Our Blessed Lady lived her wondrous life of heavenly contemplation, nourished day by day on the Bread that cometh down from Heaven—yet not for herself did she live, but for Jesus Christ and for the good of redeemed humanity. The Apostles' Queen, the oracle of the Evangelists, the glory of the Priesthood and the inspiration of all Christian virgins, was the comforter of the widows and the afflicted, the refuge of the poor and needy, the support of the tempted, the courage of the Martyrs and of all who were called upon to endure hardship for the Name of her Son. The knowledge that the Mother of God still lived amongst men was, as it were, a fragrant Sacrament—the outward and visible sign of the ineffable Grace that had been conferred upon the world. At length—so soon as the tale of her merits had been completed, and the needs of the Church made it possible, her Divine Son called His Mother to Himself, and Mary dwelt no longer upon the earth.

CHAPTER II

MARY CONCEIVED WITHOUT SIN

"Our second Eve puts on her mortal shroud,
  Earth breeds a heaven for God's new dwelling-place;
Now riseth up Elias' little cloud,
  That growing, shall distil the shower of grace;
Her being now begins, who, ere she end,
  Shall bring the good, that shall our evil mend.
Four only wights bred without fault are named,
  And all the rest conceivèd were in sin;
Without both man and wife was Adam framed;
  Of man, but not of wife, did Eve begin;
Wife without touch of man Christ's Mother was;
  Of man and wife this babe was bred in grace."

VEN. FATHER SOUTHWELL, S.J.

Original Sin.

A FUNDAMENTAL truth of the Christian Revelation—the fact that in Adam we all have sinned[1]—is to many minds most difficult of apprehension. In theological language this truth is designated the Doctrine of "Original Sin."

By Original Sin is meant not a personal sin (not, that is, a personal breach of a Divine Commandment), but the sin of another—the sin of our first

---

[1] *Cf.* Romans v. 12.

Father, the Head of our race—who sinned in the beginning of human history. This sin robbed us of supernatural endowments which otherwise would have been ours from the first moment of existence. It has thus wounded us all at the very fount of life.

That this truth is fundamental, becomes clear, when we reflect on its intimate connexion with Redemption :

O felix culpa quæ talem et tantum meruit habere Redemptorem.[1]

Had not sin been committed by the First Adam, there would have been no need for Redemption by the Second Adam ; nor would it have been true that where sin abounded, there should grace much more abound.[2] It will, however, hardly be denied that this fundamental truth presents considerable difficulty to the intellect of man. To what is known as "the Modern Mind," the fact of Original Sin is peculiarly obnoxious. "How," it is asked, "can I be called upon to believe that a sin committed in the Garden of Eden, before men knew how to read or write, can possibly have an influence upon children still unborn ?"

Yet, this truth is not merely an essential part of the Christian Faith, but also is in harmony with several postulates of modern scientific thought. For instance, it reminds us of the great principle of human solidarity which lays it down as axiomatic, that not one of us is independent of the rest. It impresses upon us in a striking manner the great principle of heredity—that a man's acts do not die with him, but overflow in their consequences upon his descendants after him. The sins of the fathers—this at least is indisputable—are often visited, even visibly, upon their children.

---

[1] Blessing of the Paschal Candle.

[2] Romans v. 20.

Again, all experience makes us suspect that, far back in the story of our race, there was some great cataclysm or disaster in the ethical order which, in its consequences, affects us at the present hour. How else adequately explain either the moral disorder all around us, or the moral disorder within our own hearts? The constant struggle between good and evil—the lusting of the flesh against the spirit, the indignation of the spirit against the flesh, the war in our members of which the Apostle writes, reminds us day by day that our nature is mysteriously out of gear.

"Video meliora proboque,
Deteriora sequor."

Such was the testimony of the Pagan poet of old—"I see the higher path, my soul approves it, alas too oft to tread the lower"—a testimony that must be sadly echoed by us all. How account for this monstrous conflict save by recognising that there is something amiss with us—a disorder for which, if we be Christians, we know that our religion provides a remedy? "Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?" We have not here a question to which no answer may be found. The old answer still suffices: "The grace of God by Christ Jesus our Lord."[1] By such considerations as these we are prepared to accept the doctrine of the Fall of man in Adam together with its corollary—man's Recovery in Jesus Christ.

Sanctifying Grace.

Let me state this doctrine. Catholics believe that the Creator bestowed upon our first parents—the first Adam and the first Eve—a gift that is gratuitous—that is, which was in no way necessary to the perfection of human nature *as such.* This gift is called *χάρις* in Greek, *gratia* in Latin. We call it *grace.* To distinguish it from the *actual* graces bestowed freely upon us all during the course of our lives, it is known as *Habitual Grace;* from its consequences it is termed *Sanctifying Grace,* since it bestows *sanctity* upon the soul.

By this gift, not only Adam and Eve, but also their descendants, were raised to the supernatural order, and closely united to their Creator, having received a nature in perfect harmony with itself—their senses obedient to their reason, their reason subject to God. Had they preserved this gift they would have passed from the time of probation in their Paradise on Earth, to perfect happiness in the Beatific Vision of God for Eternity. Then there supervened the Fall. "By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death."[1] Adam's children were born bereft of divine grace which he had cast away. They belonged to a race tainted at its source. Man's condition now resembled that of the wayfarer on the road to Jericho who fell amongst thieves. Our nature was wounded in such manner, that a darkness of the understanding, and a rebellion of the senses fell upon us all. To be born in Original Sin was to be the common lot of man.

---

[1] Romans vii. 25.

The Fall.

Catholics know that to this Law there is an exception. Mary is the Second Eve. Even as "Adam is a figure of the Second Adam who was to come,"[2] so is Eve a figure of the woman who should undo Eve's work—standing by the side of the world's Redeemer, cooperating in the restoration of mankind. As such, and as the Mother of the Incarnate Saviour, in the first instant of her creation Mary was habited in the grace of God as in a vesture of priceless gold.

The Second Eve.

Through the Merits of Christ, countless multitudes were to recover the divine grace, lost by sin—some regenerated in Baptism, others at the moment when they should turn their hearts to their Creator by an act of perfect love, and thus be united to His Divine Will. "If any man will love Me," promises our Blessed Lord, "My Father and I will come to him and abide with him." By a special privilege Mary was to receive this great gift of divine grace, not as the rest of men, after her creation, but in the first instant of her being. This is what we understand by the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of our Blessed Lady. On the one hand it is something negative, involving complete immunity from the stain of Original Sin; on the other hand it is something positive, carrying with it the fulness of grace. Mary received no lower gift than did her mother Eve, whose sin, beneath the Tree of Temptation, she should undo, for the world's healing, beneath the Rood of Calvary.

---

[1] Romans v. 12.

[2] Id. 14.

The Immaculate Conception.

When we turn to the scriptural account of the Fall of man we shall observe how intimately our first mother is bound up with the inspired narrative. The sin that called for the dread punishment was the sin of Adam. With that sin, the sin of Eve was intimately connected. In this fashion Woman co-operated with the sin of Man. "The woman whom Thou gavest me led me into sin." Such was our first father's excuse. It was an unworthy plea, but it was true. "And Adam was not deceived," writes the Apostle. Adam sinned with eyes wide open. "But the woman, having been deceived, was in the transgression. Notwithstanding, she shall be saved

The Co-operation of Eve.

by the Childbearing."[1] The first Eve, listening to the Angel of Deceit, by disobedience, prepared the way for the fall of man; it was, therefore, fitting that the second Eve, giving heed to the Angel of Truth, should, by obedience, prepare the way for Redemption. "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word." Mary by her *Ave* of submission reversed the revolt of her mother *Eva*.

The Co-operation of Mary.

Sumens illud Ave
Gabrielis ore
Mutans Evæ nomen.

To quote our glorious English martyr, Father Southwell:

"Spell Eva back, and Ave shall you find;
The first began, the last reversed our harms;
An Angel's witching words did Eva blind,
An Angel's Ave disenchants the charms.
Death first by Woman's weakness entered in,
In Woman's virtue Life doth now begin."[2]

As Woman was "in the Transgression," so was it decreed that Woman should be in the Reparation. "I will put enmities between thee and the Woman" was the divine decree in the beginning. Accordingly, when Gabriel saluted Mary, it was as one who had been already filled with grace—*Ave gratia plena*.[3] Catholics, then, believe that Mary was full of grace from the outset of her life. The

Full of grace.

---

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14.

[2] The Virgin's Salutation.

[3] Luke i. 28.

privilege bestowed upon our first mother in the natural order was not denied to her who was the Mother of our Redeemer, and in Him the mother of all the redeemed.[1] There was, however, a difference. Mary, as a daughter of Adam, would, unlike Eve yet unfallen, but like all Adam's children, have been born without the gift of sanctifying grace, had it not been for the bounty of the Redeemer. The grace of her Immaculate Conception was bestowed upon Mary Immaculate—so the Church expressly teaches—"through the foreseen Merits of Christ."[2] She who is called the Co-redemptrix is also the First of the redeemed. Redeemed, not with the rest of us, by grace bestowed *after* our coming into being, but by a more excellent way—the way of prevention. Amongst all the children of Adam, pre-eminent, sinless, solitary in her transcendent vocation, Mary could still say that her soul rejoiced in God her Saviour.

Through the Merits of God, her Saviour.

It may be well to observe here that in the case of every child save the Divine Child Jesus, the body is transmitted, by the action of natural laws established by God, through its parents (this is called the active conception of the child); whereas each soul is infused directly by God (this is called the passive conception). There is no question amongst Catholics concerning the active conception of our Lady. She was born as other children. Her Immaculate Conception relates only to the grace bestowed by God upon her soul.

---

[1] *Cf.* pp. 76-77.

[2] Bull *Ineffabilis*, defining the Immaculate Conception of our Lady.

In the famous letter (clxxiv.) in which St. Bernard blamed the Canons of Lyons for establishing in their church a Feast of the Conception of our Lady "without the authority of the Apostolic See," it is clear that he had the *active* conception only before his mind. "I say that she was at once Mother and Virgin, but not that she was born of a virgin. Otherwise where will be the prerogative of the Mother of the Lord, to have united in her person the glory of maternity and that of virginity, if you give the same honour to her mother also?"

From what has been said so far, it will be seen that the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady—the doctrine, that is, which teaches us that the most Blessed Virgin Mary was, in the first moment of her conception, preserved by a unique privilege of God, free from all stain due to the sin of our common origin—is a necessary consequence of the truth, that she holds the place in the economy of our redemption which was held by our first mother in the story of our fall. Were it otherwise, Mary could not rightly be called the Second Eve. But that she is, in fact, the Second Eve, was taught without hesitation from the beginning of Christianity and all over the Christian world.

It may be well to explain here that early in the second century there were already three Patriarchates in Christendom, each of them Petrine, that is, connected in a special manner with Blessed Peter, upon whom Christ built His Church. *Rome*, where the Prince of the Apostles died, the Patriarchate of the West (including Northern Africa)[1]; *Antioch*, where he sat first as Bishop before he moved his *Cathedra* to Rome, the Patriarchate of Asia; and *Alexandria*, whither he sent his disciple Mark, the Patriarchate (speaking generally) of Africa.

The three first Patriarchates.

The Christian literature belonging to the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, is very scanty. It is therefore remarkable that from these primitive times we have distinct testimony from each of the three great Patriarchates to the fact, that it was believed amongst Christians of those remote days, as explicitly as it is believed amongst Catholics to-day, that the Blessed Virgin holds the place of the Second Eve, repairing her mother's fault.

To establish the point, I will give short quotations from some very early Fathers. Of these St. Justin may represent the Patriarchate of Antioch, St.

---

[1] The successor of St. Peter is, *qua talis*, Head of the Universal Church. He is also Patriarch of the West and Bishop of Rome. Romans alone belong to his diocese; Latins alone belong to his Patriarchate; all Catholics, whether other Patriarchs and Bishops or simple Christians, are subject to his spiritual jurisdiction as Vicar of Christ throughout the world.

Irenæus and Tertullian the Patriarchate of Rome, and Origen the Patriarchate of Alexandria.

I. THE PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH

St. Justin, called the Philosopher, was born A.D. 100. He was educated as a Pagan in Palestinian Syria, but in manhood, was instructed in the Christian Faith, by "an old man of venerable aspect" who was previously unknown to him. His two "Apologies" for Christianity will always remain classics. In one of them occur the following words:

Testimony of St. Justin.

> "We know that the Son of God, . . . through means of the Virgin, became Man, so that the disobedience due to the serpent, might have its undoing after the same fashion that it had its beginning. For whereas Eve, yet a virgin and undefiled, through conceiving the word that came from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death—Mary the Virgin, possessed of faith and joy, when the Angel told her the good tidings . . . answered: Be it done unto me according to thy word."[1]

II. THE PATRIARCHATE OF ROME

Somewhat later, but still in the second century, Tertullian points the same contrast between Eve and Mary:

Of Tertullian.

> "It was whilst Eve was yet a virgin that the word crept in, which was the framer of death. Into

---

[1] *Tryph.* 100.

> a Virgin in like manner, must be introduced the Word of God who was the builder up of life, so that by the same sex, whence had come our ruin, might come also our recovery, to salvation. Eve had believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel. The fault which the one committed by believing, the other by believing blotted out."[1]

Of St. Irenæus.

Before Tertullian penned those words in Africa, the same thought had found expression in the writings of St. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, in Gaul.

> "The knot of Eve's disobedience obtained its unloosing through the obedience of Mary; for that which Eve a virgin bound by her unbelief, Mary a Virgin unbound by her faith."[2]

And again:

> "As Eve was seduced by an angel's word to shun God after she had transgressed His Word, so Mary, also by an Angel's word, had the glad tidings given her, that she might bear God, obeying His Word. And if the former had disobeyed God, yet the latter was persuaded to obey God, that Mary the Virgin might come to the rescue of the virgin Eve.[3] And as the human race was bound to

---

[1] *De Carne Christi*, 17.

[2] *Hær.*, iii. 34.

[3] "Ut Virginis Evæ Virgo Maria fieret advocata." St Irenæus calls the Blessed Virgin *Evæ advocata* in another passage (εἰς ἐπιδειξιν τοῦ ἀποστολίκου κγρύγματος 33). *Advocata*, however, in Irenæus does not mean *advocate* (as, for instance, in the *Salve Regina*). It either means *consoler*, as when Irenæus says of our Lord *advocabat omnes homines plangentes* (*Adv. Hær.* iii. 9, 3); or *one who comes to the rescue of*, as, for example, when he writes of those who denied the salvation of Adam:

> death by means of a virgin, it is saved by means of a Virgin; the poise of the balance being restored—a virgin's disobedience is saved by the obedience of a Virgin."[1]

Now, this thought of the undoing of the disobedience and work of Eve by the obedience and work of Mary—the one having her share in the Reparation, as the other in the Fall of humanity—cannot have come independently to Justin in Asia, to Tertullian in Africa and to Irenæus in Europe. Their confident teaching—they took it for granted as known generally amongst Christians—must have had a common source. We may infer, then, without hesitation that this source can only have been a Tradition inherited from the Apostles. This will hardly be questioned with respect to Justin and Tertullian when we remember who were their instructors in the Faith; in the case of Irenæus there is absolutely no room for any doubt. We know that Irenæus was instructed in his youth at Smyrna by Polycarp, who had himself been instructed by St. John the Evangelist; we know also, that later in life, Irenæus had studied in Rome, where he tells us himself that St. Clement, the

---

advocatos se serpentis et mortis ostendunt," (*Ib.*, iii. 23, 8; *cf.* iii. 23, 8; iv. 34, 4). So here Mary is represented as consoling Eve and coming to her rescue by repairing, through her obedience at the Incarnation, that which Eve had lost by disobedience in the garden.

[1] *Hær.*, v. 19.

Bishop of Rome at the time, "had seen the Apostles and conferred with them, and had their preaching still ringing in his ears and their Tradition before his eyes, and not Clement alone, but many in that Church still survived, who had been taught by the Apostles."[1]

St. Irenæus, then, gives us not only the Asiatic, but also the Roman Tradition, not only the Tradition of the holy Apostle John, but also that of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul. It was from this source—the teaching of Peter, Paul and John—that Irenæus learned that which he, in his turn, taught the Faithful in his *Refutation of Heresies*. But whence did Peter, Paul and John derive their teaching, save from that Deposit of Faith, from which St. Paul had drawn the doctrine of the Second Adam—from the Divine Revelation "made in the beginning to the Saints"?

III. THE PATRIARCHATE OF ALEXANDRIA

Tertullian, though an African, belonged to the Roman Patriarchate. For the Patriarchate of Alexandria let us turn to Origen. Towards the end of the second century Origen wrote as follows:

Of Origen.

> "Elisabeth prophesies before John, Mary prophesies before the Saviour's Birth. And as sin began from a woman and then came to man, so too, the beginning of salvation has its origin from a woman."[2]

---

[1] *Id.*, iii. 3.

[2] *In Luc. Hom.* VII.

In another passage he puts these words into the mouth of Elisabeth :

> "It behoved me to come to thee, for thou art blessed above all other women; thou art the Mother of my Lord: thou art my Lady who bearest the undoing of the curse."[1]

In neither of these places does the great Alexandrian expressly call the Blessed Virgin the Second Eve. Unhappily his *Homilies upon the Annunciation*, where very probably he did so, have been lost. I think that these words *very probably* can be justified by the significant fact, that Origen's disciple, St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, in the one authentic Homily still extant from his pen,[2] has written as follows :

Of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus.

> "Because the first Virgin Eve fell, seduced by Satan, Gabriel brought his message to the Virgin Mary, that the one Virgin might answer to the other, and birth might answer to birth. Deceived by flatteries Eve gave birth to words of death; Mary receiving the [Angel's] message gave birth to the Incarnate Word, the Word of Life. In consequence of the words of Eve, Adam was driven from Paradise; the Word [that was born] of Mary revealed the Cross, by which the Thief entered into Adam's Paradise."[3]

This primitive Tradition was handed down faithfully through the ages. We find it scattered through the writings of the Fathers. It was summed up with conciseness by St. Theodotus of Ancyra, when he wrote that God who formed the first virgin without reproach, Himself made the second Virgin also without fault or guilt;[1] It had been expressed by St. Epiphanius speaking for Palestine, Egypt and Cyprus in the words: "Eve became the cause of death to Man, Mary the cause of life"[2]; so that Cardinal Newman tells us that "the contrast between Eve and Mary had passed almost into a proverb"[3] at the time when St. Jerome wrote: "Death by Eve, life by Mary."[4]

---

[1] *Fragm. in Luc.*

[2] *Cf. Marie dans l'Eglise Anténicéenne,* par E. Neubert, p. 185.

[3] *Serm. in Natal. Christi,* 23.

This doctrine is expressed with much exuberance of language in the writings of St. Ephrem the Syrian in the first half of the fourth century. Thus we find him writing in the person of the Church of Edessa:

> "Verily indeed Thou and Thy Mother are alone in being in every respect altogether beautiful. For in Thee, O Lord, there is no spot, nor is there any stain in Thy Mother."[5]

And again:

> "Those two innocent, those two simple ones, Mary and Eve, had been indeed quite equal the

---

[1] *Hom. IV. in S. Deip. et Simeon.*

[2] *Hær.*, lxxviii. 18.

[3] *Answer to Pusey*, p. 43.

[4] *Ep.*, xxii. 21.

[5] "Revera quidem Tu et Mater Tua, Vos soli estis qui omni ex parte omnino pulchri sunt. In Te enim, Domine, non est labes, nec ulla in Matre Tua macula."—*S. Eph. Syri Carmina*, Lipsiæ, 1866.

> one to the other: but, afterwards, one became the cause of our death, the other of our life."[1]

The hymns of St. Ephrem are full of this doctrine. The following are verses from his Hymn XVIII. *In Commemoration of the Mother of God:*

> "The Adam from above appeared with all things that were of the former Adam and followed his steps, sin excepted. And for this reason was He called Adam by his herald Paul. . . .
>
> "Mary is the garden upon which descended from the Father the rain of benedictions. From that rain she herself sprinkled the face of Adam. Whereupon he returned to life and arose from the sepulchre—he who had been buried by his foes in hell. . . .
>
> "Sublime is the Mystery of the Virgin most pure, too great for all tongues to speak.
>
> "Eve in Eden became guilty. Great was the handwriting of the debt, whereby her posterity were doomed to death. The Serpent, that perverse Scrivener, wrote it out, signed and gave it force with the seal of his fraud. . . .
>
> "Eve it was that was found guilty of sin. But the debt was reserved for Mary, that so the daughter might pay her mother's debts and tear up the handwriting that had transmitted her groans to all generations.
>
> "Since Mary was the Virgin Inviolate—prepared by Eden's blest region ere its lands were torn by furrows—there blossomed from her Bosom the Tree of Life which by its taste, that is by its Mercy, gives life to souls."

---

[1] *Op. Syr.*, Tom. II., p. 327*a*.

And again:

> "Instead of the Serpent arose Gabriel, and instead of Eve, Mary the Virgin. . . .
>
> "Eve became a debtor to God; she it was who gave ear to the Serpent's counsel. A child of one day, she despised the commandment, and therefore through a young Maiden, salvation was sent to the world.
>
> "Gabriel by his words undid the speech that the execrable wanderer had held with the virgin Eve. Eve had written the debt in her handwriting and the Virgin paid the debt. . . .
>
> "The daughter full of grace stood up in battle for her mother. Eve had fallen, Mary raised her up, and to the exiles was given hope of their reconciliation and return to Eden."[1]

We find an echo of this tradition even in the Koran. Mr. Rodwell writes: "According to a tradition of Muhammed every new-born child is touched by Satan,[2] with the exception of Mary and her Son, between whom, and Satan, God 'interposed a veil.' These words of the Koran, therefore, with verse 37 of the same Sura [iii]: 'O Mary, verily God hath chosen thee, and hath purified thee and chosen thee above the women of the world,' seem to show that Muhammed had received the Christian Tradition of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin." Gibbon, however, turns the facts round and suggests that "Christians borrowed this doctrine from the Koran."[1] Belief in Mary's Immaculate Conception has remained living in the East—where Muhammed learned it—not only amongst Catholics, but also in separated heretical bodies where we might have expected that it would disappear; thus, it is to be found amongst the Eutychians, notwithstanding the fact, that their error commenced with the denial that Christ was of one substance, not with His Heavenly Father alone, but with his earthly Mother also, and amongst the Nestorians, whose specific heresy it is to deny to that Mother her title of Theotokos, that is Mother of God.[2] The Abyssinians, who are Eutychian in their Christological doctrine, to this day cherish a strange belief that the Blessed Virgin was created before the Fall, and was actually in the Garden of Eden, where our Lord made a compact with her about the salvation of the world. We have here, evidently, a corruption of the teaching of St. Irenæus that Mary was Eve's advocate and undid her work.[3]

---

[1] *On the Annunciation of the Mother of God*, Hymn II, verses 9-14.

[2] *Cf.* p. 12.

---

[1] *Decline and Fall*, Chapter I.

[2] The learned Dr. Gustavus Bickell, who first published the *Carmina Misilena* in 1866, from the Syriac MS. in the British Museum, quotes George Varda, the most celebrated hymnographer of the Nestorians, as thus giving their tradition: "Mary was sanctified in the very moment of her Conception. She alone was preserved from the universal deluge of sin, and remained dry and unmoistened as the fleece of Gideon."

[3] See Article in *Dublin Review* for April, 1868, pp. 356-60; also Livius, *The Blessed Virgin in the Fathers of the First Six Centuries*, pp. 208-254.

The Holy Scriptures show us the idea of Mary emerging from the beginning, in the Mind of God, in the primeval prophecy.

"I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed" (Gen. iii. 15)—these are divine words concerning the Woman who was to defeat the enemy to whom her first mother had succumbed. That Woman of Victory and of Prophecy is our Lady. We cannot doubt it when we read that the enmities were to be, not only between herself and Satan, but also between her Seed and his seed. Her seed undoubtedly is the Redeemer—Mary's Son. Thus do we find, at the very opening of our Sacred Books, Jesus and Mary, the Son and His Mother, joined together in our Reparation, as our first parents were joined in our Fall. Blessed Grignon De Montfort observes that God, the Author of Peace, has only made one enmity—that between good and evil, between Mary and Satan, but this God-made enmity is everlasting. It reached from the beginning to the end. Here, then, in the Book of Genesis, is the Doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, not yet stated explicitly, but necessarily involved in the thought which is suggested. Eve was God's daughter, clothed in grace; therefore she once was Satan's foe. Seduced by her enemy, she fell away; the place from which she fell was to be filled by Mary. In order that this should be verified Mary, like Eve, must be Immaculate from the first moment of her existence.

This truth was handed down from age to age, until when the doctrine of Original Sin was denied by the heretic Pelagius, he urged, appealing to a fact recognised by all, which no Christian would be rash enough to deny, that in the case of the Mother of our Lord and Saviour, it is necessary to orthodoxy to believe that she is without sin. The answer of St. Augustine is famous:

> "With the exception of the holy Virgin Mary, touching whom, out of respect to our Lord, when we are on the subject of sins, I have no mind to entertain the question—for how are we to know what greater degree of grace was conferred, in order to vanquish sin in every respect, upon her who merited to conceive and bring forth Him whom all allow to have had no sin? with the exception of this Virgin, if it was in our power to bring together into one place all the Saints, men and women, when they lived here, and ask them whether they were without sin, what are we to suppose they would have answered—that which this man [Pelagius] says, or that which John the Apostle said. . . . 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.'"[1]

St. Augustine had himself been baptised by St. Ambrose, who writes of Mary as "a Virgin by grace, entirely free from any stain of sin."[2]

In these words we find summed up the ancient doctrine of the Church, East and West, handed down from the Apostles. Like other Apostolic doctrines, it was destined in the Providence of God, before formal definition by the Church, to be closely examined by the schoolmen of the early Middle Ages. During that time of searching analysis, some great Dominicans held that our Lady was sanctified, not in the first, but in the second moment of her existence. This view was novel, unknown to antiquity, and never widely spread. It soon disappeared, and when Pius IX., of holy memory, consulted the Catholic Episcopate as to the tradition of their Churches, the reply from every part of Christendom was unanimous. Catholics had received from their fathers the truth which they in their turn were faithfully handing down to their children, that the Blessed Mother of God from the first moment of her existence, by a special privilege of God, through the Merits of her Son and Saviour, had been preserved immune from all taint of Original Sin. The way was now clear. To the great joy of all Catholics, it was solemnly defined in the Dogmatic Bull *Ineffabilis* that this is a Truth revealed by God—a truth which no man henceforth, now that the Church has spoken, may deny without thereby making shipwreck of the Faith that was once delivered to the Saints.

---

[1] *De Nat. et Grat.* contra Pelag. xli.

[2] "*Virgo per gratiam, ab omni integra labe peccati.*"

It should be clearly understood that Catholics do not hold that all revealed Truth is taught explicitly in Holy Scripture. It abundantly suffices that a truth of revelation be contained in the Divine Tradition. The same authority which taught Christians before a line of the New Testament was written, teaches Christians now. The Catholic Church bears, within her consciousness, a living memory of that which was committed to her keeping in the beginning. She has been built upon a rock, and is ever guided by the Holy Spirit, in accordance with the Promises of Christ. When therefore she teaches, she draws upon her divinely protected memory. This is involved in the idea of the Infallibility of the Church.

It is difficult to understand how any Christian can find intellectual difficulty in the fact of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of our Lord. As Cardinal Newman has observed, the real difficulty lies, not in the Exception, but in the Law to which the Exception has been made.

"Many, many doctrines are far harder than the Immaculate Conception. The doctrine of Original Sin is indefinitely harder. Mary has not got this difficulty. Our teaching about Mary has just one difficulty less than our teaching about the state of mankind generally."[1]

Granted the Law, the Exception is surely that which we should expect—we who believe that Christ is God and that Mary is His Mother. "It was fitting; it was possible; God accomplished it."[2] This was the argument of the great Franciscan

[1] *Meditations and Devotions*, p. 125.

[2] "Decuit; potuit; ergo fecit Deus."

Duns Scotus in the Schools of Paris in the twelfth century. We know that this likelihood, arising from our idea of the Ineffable Sanctity of God and His nearness to Mary, corresponds with reality, for of this we are assured by the infallible teaching of His Church, which in our own day has afforded the certainty of Faith to the conviction of Saints and Doctors and Mystics, and of the simple Faithful of every land and of all the ages. Jesus and His Mother stand apart. Jesus sinless of His own Nature; His Mother sinless through His Grace and Goodness—the House of peerless beauty which Wisdom built for Himself to be His living Home.

I have thought it advisable in this chapter to dwell upon the Immaculate Conception of our Lady mainly from its theological aspect. It must, however, never be imagined that this Mystery possesses merely a theoretic or intellectual interest for Catholics. On the contrary, in an age of naturalism it floods the soul with supernatural light, forcing us to remember our own weakness as members of a fallen race, and insisting on God's abhorrence of sin. For, whilst "we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities," yet "it was fitting" that He should be "separate from sinners."[1] From His Mother he was never "separate." She was Immaculate from the first moment of her being. This is the wellspring of all her sanctity. Her foundations were laid on Mount Sion; her first steps were in the beginning upon the everlasting hills; the Lord clothed her with His vesture that her path might be in security and her ways in peace. Thus does she stand without a peer, unique in her grace—incomparable. Of all creatures there is none beside her. Yet, from sinful men she is not aloof. Mary is the Mother appointed to undo Eve's work in our regard. For our sake is she thus graced and gifted, that she may give to us freely, with loving outstretched hands, that which she has so freely received from God. So does it come to pass, that as the sense of her unstained purity sinks deeper and deeper into our minds, we learn with ever-increasing confidence to seek the aid of God's Immaculate Mother in our longing to be cleansed from the stain of sin—that so we may be found by her side in the never-ending fight with evil. "O Mary," we cry to her, "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us poor sinners who have recourse to thee." And indeed all experience bears witness to the untold value of prayer to Mary Immaculate, as a weapon given us by God, to be wielded in the warfare we all have to wage day by day within our own souls in the strength of the love of Christ our Lord.

---

[1] *Cf.* Hebrews iv. 15 and vii. 26.

Devotion to the Immaculate Mother of God spans and unites the Christian ages. I will set down here a prayer penned by Ephrem the Syrian. Some sixteen centuries have passed since first it was inspired by his confidence in the stainless Virgin's intercession. We share St. Ephrem's faith. If we will but pray as he has taught us, and the Church would have us, we need fear no foe. Like the Saints who have gone before us, we shall never ask our Lady's help in vain.

"But now we unite to praise thee, O pure and immaculate One, Blessed Virgin and sinless Mother of thy great Son and the God of all. O perfectly spotless and altogether holy, thou art the hope of despairing sinners. We bless thee as most full of grace, who didst give birth to Christ, God and Man. We all fall down before thee. We all invoke thee and implore thy help. Deliver us, O Virgin, holy and undefiled, from every pressing strait and from all temptations of the Evil One. Be thou our peacemaker in the hour of death and judgment. Do thou save us from the future unquenchable fire and from the exterior darkness. Do thou render us worthy of the Glory of thy Son, O Virgin and Mother most sweet and clement."[1]

O! clemens, O! pia, O! dulcis Virgo Maria.

---

[1] *Threni B.M.V. Opp. Gr. et Lat.*, Tom. iii., p. 574.

CHAPTER III

MARY, VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

Hoc solum de Virgine cogitare, quod Dei Mater est, excedit omnem altitudinem quæ post Deum dici aut cogitari potest.—S. ANSELMUS.

THE privilege of Immaculate Conception was bestowed upon our Lady as a free gift from God. In no sense was it merited—she received it for the sake of men that she might fitly co-operate in the work of Redemption; above all she received it for the sake of her Son. It was the first of her endowments designed to equip her soul for the supreme office—the most sublime that can be conferred on a creature—the Motherhood of God.

Doctrine of the Incarnation.

It is the Catholic Doctrine—the Doctrine of the Creeds and of the Ancient Councils of the Church, handing down to us the Divine Tradition, that God took to Himself a human Body, formed by the operation of the Holy Spirit, from the body of Mary, and thus became her Child. This is taught expressly in the Holy Scriptures. "A Body hast Thou fitted for Me." "The Word was made Flesh." Jesus Christ is the Word made

Flesh, for whom a Body was fitted. Mary is the Mother of Jesus. The Holy Ghost was to overshadow her, and the Holy One, to be formed of her, should be called the Son of God.[1]

This is the very heart of historic Christianity—that is, of Christianity as it has come down to us from its origins. If any man fail to accept the statement of the Creed: "I believe in God the Father Almighty Creator of Heaven and earth," he has no right to be called a Theist; unless he accept also the further profession of faith: "And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary," it is difficult to see how,—if words are to preserve the meaning they have borne for well-nigh two thousand years—he can have any claim to the Christian Name. Faith in Christianity begins with faith in the truth that Jesus Christ, the Virgin's Son, is the Lord our God. In His Human Nature He is as truly and really of one Substance with His human Mother, as in the Everlasting Trinity He is consubstantial with His Father in Heaven.

> "Just as all the Law and the Prophets are contained in two words, so too all our hope hangs upon the Childbearing of Blessed Mary."[2]

---

[1] "Should be called the Son of God" is a well-known Hebraism for "should be in truth the Son of God."

[2] *Acta Disputationis S. Archelai cum Manete Hæresiarchæ*, xlix. (*P.G.* Tom. x., p. 1512). These Acts are a great authority on Manichæism. It is uncertain who is really represented in the discussion under the name of Archelaus, Bishop of Chalcar in Mesopotamia.

This, it will be freely admitted, is no light matter. We poor mortals here find ourselves in the presence of the very heart of Mystery. When we behold the unveiled features of the Babe of Bethlehem, we are gazing in very truth upon the veiled Majesty of God.

Basil of Seleucia on the Mystery of the Mother of God.

> "What subject," asked Basil of Seleucia, "can be more sublime than this? No man can either conceive or speak of that which is the medium between the divine and the human. For, as it is no easy matter either to conceive or speak of God—yea rather it is a thing utterly impossible—so is the great Mystery of the Mother of God above all thought and speech."[1]

It *is* utterly impossible to conceive of God as He is. We can only think of Him by way of negation or by way of analogy. By the method of negation we deny in Him all that is limited and imperfect—He is the Infinite, the Eternal, the All-perfect; by the method of analogy, rising to His Divine Attributes from the consideration of the excellences in men which are His gifts, we say in our stammering speech that He is Absolute Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, and the like. Such words are true, so far as words are able to express truth, for all goodness in the creature must be found in perfection in the Creator. Yet we know that human language is defective, and human thought fails to express God adequately. We see Him as in a glass darkly, not yet face to face.

---

[1] *Orat. X. de Annuntiatione Deiparæ.*

In the Incarnation of God all this is reversed. The Infinite and the Eternal limits Himself by submission, as Man, to the conditions of time and space. He shrouds His dazzling Glory. The Mighty becomes weak, taking the form of a slave. He who made the earth becomes a Babe and lies upon straw. We see Him, who feeds us all, a-hungered and a-thirst. He who poises the Heavens with His power is tired, and sits wearied beside Jacob's Well. He falls beneath the weight of a cross of wood. Upon that Cross the Immortal renders up the ghost. . . .

This is the Mystery of the Bending-down of the Heavens to the earth; it is also the Mystery of the Mother of God. For she is the point of contact, "the medium between the divine and the human." Her Son is the Creator. His Mother is a creature, the work of His Hands. Yet, in her chaste Womb the divine and the human met, for the Fruit of her Womb is both God and Man, Christ Jesus our Lord. On this account it is said, with reason, that the great Mystery of the Mother of God, is like the Mystery of God Himself, in that it too transcends all thought and speech. But transcendent though it be, it is a Mystery which we must needs ponder within our souls, for it is the inmost core of our religion—the religion of Divine Love manifested in Divine Abasement.

When we say that God is God, we have said all that can well be said, though we may develop the thought, dwelling upon His Attributes; in like manner when we have said that Mary is the Mother of God, we have exhausted the measure of her dignity. Yet we do well to linger on this holy ground, for the more we dwell upon the thought of Mary's Motherhood, the deeper glows the Mystery, and the more resplendent is seen to be the glory of our Lady.

> "How shall I attempt the Virgin Ocean?" continues Basil. "How shall I search into the depths of the mighty Mystery? for I have not my lips purified with a coal from heaven, like Isaias who saw the Seraphim; nor have I, like the heavenly Moses, the feet of my soul bared of their covering—if thou, O Mother of God, dost not teach me—if thou in thy mercy dost not fill the mouth of my understanding, that I may penetrate to the depths of thy Childbearing; so that being surrounded with the light of thy mercy, I may find the pearl of truth within thee. Do thou, then, aid me to the obtaining of this mighty thing, that being taught by thee I may be able to speak concerning thee—not as to how thou didst bring forth the Incarnate Lord—for the manner of thy Childbearing is beyond any Law, save that thou wert a Mother and didst remain a Virgin. What tongue is there so eloquent as worthily to hymn that Virgin Mother's praises? For through her Name we have merited immense blessings. With what flowers of eulogy shall we weave a garland that may befit her? Of her the Flower

> of Jesse germinated and crowned our race with glory and honour. What gifts shall we offer that may be worthy of her, of whom all the things of this world are not worthy? For if Paul says of the other Saints: 'Of whom the world was not worthy,' what shall we say of the Mother of God?
>
> "O Virginity through which Angels that were aforetime averse from our race, now rejoice at being sent to minister thereto; and Gabriel is gladdened at being entrusted with the annunciation of the divine Conception. Wherefore from that joy and from that all-hail let our address begin. 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.' . . . Hail, full of grace, hail thou who didst mediate between God and men, that the partition wall of enmity might be taken away and that which is of earth be made one with that which is of heaven."[1]

The Virgin-Mother.

After some such fashion as this are the Fathers of the Church accustomed to join together the thought of Mary's Virginity with that of her Motherhood, and vie one with another in celebrating the lustre of her spotless Maidenhood, together with the incomparable glory of her Maternity. In this matter, to quote one is to quote the rest. "What Gabriel," asks Optatus of Milevis, "has spoken a second time to a second Mary? What other Virgin has given birth to a child?"[2] "Mary's Privilege," writes St. Bernard, shall be given to no other; nor shall it be taken from her. She alone is Virgin and Mother—the Virgin Mother of God."[3]

---

[1] *Orat. X. de Annuntatione Deiparæ.*

[2] *Con. Don.*, iii. 11.

[3] *B.V.M.*, *In Assumptione,* Sermo. II. 5.

Mary, Mother of Christ, stands alone in God's creation. By God's grace she possesses the unshared privilege of Divine Motherhood as the crown of unstained virginity. She is the *Virgo Singularis*. Immaculate, Virgin, Mother! There is none beside her.

Let us listen to a voice from the beginning of the fifth century:

> "In place of the Virgin Eve, who had been the minister of death, is chosen a Virgin, most pleasing to God and full of God's grace, for the service of life—a Virgin included in woman's sex, but without part in woman's fault, a Virgin innocent, without stain, free from all sin, spotless, undefiled, holy in spirit and body, as 'a lily blossoming amongst thorns,'[1] unlearned in the evil ways of Eve . . . worthy of her Maker was she given to us by the Providence of God, not to encourage disobedience, but to lead the way to obedience; not to offer the fruit of death, but to furnish the Bread of Life. . . . Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou most beautiful and fairest of women. The Lord is with thee, thou that art altogether venerable, altogether glorious, altogether good. The Lord is with thee, O thou worshipful, incomparable One, surpassing all brightness, resplendent with the glory of light, worthy of God, ever-blessed. . . . On thine account Eve's sadness has ceased; through thee error has departed; through thee has the curse been abolished; through thee Eve has been redeemed. For Holy is that which was born of her who is holy—

---

[1] *Cant.* ii. 2.

> Holy, and the Lord of all who are holy; Holy, even He, to whom it belongs to impart holiness. Singular is He who was born of her who is singular. Inexplicable He who comes from her who cannot be explained. The Son of the Most High is the offspring of her who is most high. . . . Hail thou Virgin, full of grace, amongst virgins a Mother, and amongst mothers a Virgin! Of virgins and of mothers thou art the figure and the type, whilst in very truth thou hast surpassed the twain."[1]

Denial of our Lady's Virginity by some ancient heretics.

In the fourth century a heresy arose which denied that our Lady remained a Virgin after the Birth of her Divine Son, in opposition to the Catholic Doctrine that the Mother of God was Ever-Virgin, *ante partum, in partu et post partum.*[2] This heresy soon faded away, repugnant as it was to the whole sense and tradition of Christendom. Before its extinction it was vigorously combated and denounced by great Saints and Doctors such as Epiphanius, Jerome, and Ambrose.

---

[1] St. Theodotus, Hom. VI. 11, 12, *In S. Deip. et in Natal. Dom.*

[2] *Cf.* St. Epiphanius, *De Laudibus Mariæ*, vii.; St. Ambrose, *De Inst. Virg.*, vii. 52-56, viii., xi., xii., 79; St. Jerome, *Comment. in Ezech.*, xliv., etc. John Cassian quotes St. Ambrose thus: "Behold the miracle of our Lord's Mother: a Virgin, she conceived, a Virgin, she brought forth, a Virgin was she when she conceived, a Virgin when pregnant, a Virgin after childbirth, as it is said in Ezechiel: 'And the gate was shut, and it was not opened, for the Lord had passed through it.'" Quotations to this effect might be multiplied almost indefinitely from the Ancient Fathers.

> "Illustrious, then, is Mary," wrote St. Ambrose, "who bore aloft the standard of holy virginity, and raised on high for Christ the sacred flag of inviolable chastity. And yet, though all are invited to the practice of virginity by the example of Holy Mary, there have been some who would deny that she persevered as a virgin."[1]

And St. Jerome stated the Catholic Doctrine concisely:

> "The garden which was enclosed, the fountain that was sealed up,[2] is a figure of the Mother of the Lord, Mother and Virgin. Hence in the Saviour's new sepulchre which was hewn in most hard rock, no one was laid either before or after. Yet, this perpetual Virgin is the mother of many virgins."[3]

Addressing Helvidius who was the first to deny our Lady's Perpetual Virginity, the holy Doctor thus reproached the innovator:

> "O, most ignorant of men, thou hast abandoned all the testimony of the Scriptures, and hast madly wronged the Virgin, copying the man of whom the story goes that, since he was unknown to the world, and was not able to think of any good deed whereby to bring himself into notice, he set Diana's temple on fire. When asked by the chief men of Ephesus what object he had in thus acting, he replied, 'To gain an evil notoriety, since I could not obtain a good one.' Thus the Greek tale, but thou hast set on fire the Temple of the Lord's Body, thou hast defiled the Sanctuary of the Holy Ghost, from

---

[1] *De Inst. Virg.*, v. 35.

[2] *Cant.*, iv. 12.

[3] *Adv. Jovin.*, i. 31.

> which thou wilt have it that four brothers and a number of sisters came forth. Thou hast obtained thine object and become notorious by means of thy wickedness.[1] . . . Thou sayest that Mary did not remain a virgin. For myself, I claim more, that, through Mary, Joseph too was a virgin, that from a virginal marriage might be born the virgin Son."

St. Epiphanius also was indignant :

> "Some men [the new heretics] have ventured to outrage with insult that Holy and Blessed Virgin, saying that after the wondrous and virgin mystery of the Lord's Incarnation she suffered the loss of virginity—a thing which surpasses all other wickedness and impiety."[2]

Again he writes :

> "Who in any generation has ever dared to utter the name of Holy Mary and did not at once, when asked, straightway add the title of Virgin ?"[3]

And in modern days.

What, one wonders, would the Saints of old—what would Ambrose, Jerome and Epiphanius—what would any one of the great Fathers of the Church who, in unbroken line, handed on the Divine Tradition and proclaimed the glory of Mary's spotless virginity—have found to say, had they surmised that in these latter days men should arise who would declare that they had the right still to call themselves Christians, nay, to remain even official teachers, and in certain cases highly placed dignitaries, in a Christian Church and yet deny that our Lady was a virgin when she bore her Divine Son.

---

[1] *Ad Helvidium de Perp. Virgin. B.M.*, 16, 19.

[2] *Hær.*, Lib. III. lxxviii. 22.

[3] *Id.*, vi.

In two places in the Koran, Muhammed, more Christian in this than some modern Anglicans, asserts the Virginity of our Lady: "And Mary, the daughter of Imram who kept her maidenhood, and into whose womb We [God] breathed of Our Spirit."[1]

Anglican Modernists assure us that it is possible to deny our Lady's Virginity and yet preserve the substance of Christianity. How different was the judgment of the Fathers of the Church. St. Proclus, the disciple of St. John Chrysostom, gave utterance to the sentiment of all in these words:

> "Unless His Mother had remained a virgin, her offspring would have been but man, and the mystery of the Birth would have been lost. But if after her childbearing she remained a virgin, how shall not He be God and a Mystery which is unutterable?"[2]

We are told that it is necessary to conciliate and come to terms with the "modern mind."

Strip then, if you will, the Faith of its awful Mystery. Suggest, if it please you, to "the modern man," that the Gospel narrative is a myth, or—to quote the words of Dr. Sanday, a most highly respected and moderate exponent of the new view—that it is at best a realistic expression, adapted to the thought of a time that is long past, of an ineffable truth which the thought of bygone ages could not express in any other way[1]—tell him, if it seems good to you, that you are able "to subsume the idea of the Virgin-Birth under the yet larger and more important idea of Supernatural Birth"—say to him, if it pleases you: "I will venture to express my meaning in a phrase: it all seems to me to stand (*sit venia verbo*) for the direct influx of Deity into mankind"[2]—but who that knows "the modern man" as he is, will expect him to agree with you? Numberless modern minds, like ancient minds and mediæval minds before them, bow down in reverence before "the Mystery hidden in God from endless ages"—the Mystery of the Incarnation of God, born in time of a Virgin Mother—but, outside a handful of leisured Anglican clergymen dreaming their lives away in theoretic speculations, who will be ready "to subsume the idea of the Virgin Birth under that of a supernatural birth"? Men will ask, and I think will ask with reason, why should they be called upon to do anything of the kind?

---

[1] *Sura*, lxvi. 12. *Cf. Sura*, xxi. 91.

[2] *Orat. I. in Laudibus S. Mariæ.* This discourse was placed at the beginning of the Acts of the Council of Ephesus.

Dr. Sanday's fine phrases, if perilously vague, may sound pleasantly enough to the ear of the unbeliever, but how shall they escape the charge of tampering with the Faith? If "the supernatural birth," of which Dr. Sanday informs his readers that he has neither doubt nor hesitation,[1] be not that Birth from a Virgin-Mother, concerning which we read in the Gospels, which is enshrined in the Creeds, which has been the object of the adoring wonder of all the Christian Saints, which has inspired the Martyrs in their torments, and has been reckoned the glory of womanhood and the joy of humanity in every believing heart—if the picture of Mary the Virgin venerated in every Catholic home is the picture of one who is not a virgin at all, but of one who bore her Son as other women bear their children—then what is Christianity but a fraud, and why—can anyone tell me why in plain language which I can understand—*why* should I believe in any supernatural birth of any kind whatsoever? If men are taught that Joseph was (or perhaps was) the father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the same sense that Mary is His Mother, they will soon regard Jesus Christ as no more than human. Nor, in view of the teaching of Christianity throughout the centuries, would this be an unreasonable conclusion.

---

[1] *Form and Content in the Christian Tradition*, p. xiii.

[2] *Id.*, p. 9.

Christianity has always taught that the Saviour of the world was born of a pure Virgin. Until recent years the Virginity of our Lady was taught unhesitatingly by all Anglican Divines. Bishop Pearson, for example, thus bears witness to the common Christian teaching:

---

[1] Dr. Sanday writes that personally he will not *deny* "the *Virgin* Birth," although he refuses to *affirm* it as a fact, but he does assert a "Supernatural Birth," the nature of which is left vague and undetermined.

> "We show first that the Messias was to be born of a Virgin according to the prediction of the Prophets; secondly, that this Mary, of whom Christ was born, was really a Virgin when she bare Him, according to the relation of the Evangelists; thirdly, that being at once the Mother of the Son of God, and yet a Virgin, she continued for ever in the same Virginity, according to the Tradition of the Fathers and the constant doctrine of the Church."[1]

And again:

> "We believe the Mother of our Lord to have been not only before and after His Nativity, but also for ever, the most Immaculate and Blessed Virgin."[2]

If this be false, or if it be merely "a realistic expression," who can expect to be listened to when he attempts to deny that Christianity has proclaimed a falsehood on the housetops? It is, assuredly, far more difficult for "the modern mind" (at least as we find that mind in the ordinary modern man) to believe—in the teeth of the Gospels and in flat contradiction to authoritative, world-wide Christian teaching in every age—that Christ was born (or may have been born) as the result of the laws that govern birth in other men, and yet to preserve his faith in Christ's Godhead, than it can be frankly to accept the Christian Creed. That Creed must either remain what it is—a supernatural Mystery transcending in a thousand ways common experience, or in the minds of men it will soon lose all serious import and be banished to the galleries that contain curious pictures of the dead. It would, like the outworn religions of the past, cease to live.

---

[1] *Pearson on the Creed*, p. 305.

[2] *Id.*, p. 322. *Cf.* pp. 309, 324.

In these modern times of ours it is as true as in the days of St. Jerome that: In this matter there can be no middle course. We must hold either that the Mother of Christ was a Virgin, or that she was not.[1]

Christianity, with its glorious history, could never survive its vulgarisation. Christ our Lord assumed indeed the common lot of toil, of pain in soul and body, the common lot of death; but let it once be suspected that He was born as other men are born, that after His death He allowed His disciples to know that He survived, but that by no means did He rise in the Body which He had assumed of Mary—that in fact, the Gospel narrative concerning His Birth from a Virgin Mother, His bodily resurrection, and His glorious Ascension are not true literally as they are stated by the Sacred Writers—then, the Christ thus presented to men's minds for their consideration, may be regarded as greater than His Apostles, greater than Peter and greater than Paul, greater it may be than all other men who ever lived, but certainly not as One with the Father—not the God whom Christians have adored in every age. The Christian Citadel will have been betrayed. The Christian Faith will have perished off the earth. This calamity, we are well assured, can never befall the world, for the Promises of Christ never fail, and His Church is built upon a rock. But numbers of men and women, unhappily separated from the Church of Christ, are to-day exposed to a grave danger of losing that which, thank God, notwithstanding their separation, they have so far preserved intact, unless they be prepared resolutely to turn a deaf ear to the voices which proclaim that the modern mind can no longer accept the Creed literally—for example, that the modern mind is unable to accept the doctrine that Christ was born of a Virgin Mother.

---

[1] "Medium esse nihil potest. Aut mea sententia sequenda est, aut Ioviniani."—S. Hieron, *Epist.* xlviii. 21.

And *why* are we, to be hypnotised into accepting a shibboleth which lays it down, that the modern mind is unable (because it is "modern") to accept truths dear to the minds—no weak minds—of all Christians who have gone before us? Because—so we are told—men now recognise that miracles are impossible. No attempt is made to disprove the evidences of Christianity; nor is there any effort to deal with the proofs (in numberless cases overwhelmingly strong) that God, as a matter of *fact* (as distinct from *theories*), has been pleased to work miracles for our behoof in every age.

When we analyse the formula that "Miracles are impossible," we find that we are confronted with an unverified and unverifiable proposition. It is based upon another formula, equally unproved, which tells us that the Uniformity of Nature is so fixed, that it is like a Divine Law, so that God will never derogate from its operation. From the supposed fact, that the modern mind will not accept miracles, is drawn the conclusion, that it has become necessary to surrender the miraculous in Christianity, hoping to preserve intact "its inward essence," however differently this undefined "essence" may be understood by differing minds. To all such "profane novelties" Catholics have but one answer. "I believe (and if you ask me I am prepared to lay before you the grounds of my faith)—I believe in the One Faith."

> "The One Faith," wrote Optatus, "commends us all who are Christians to the keeping of Almighty God. To this Faith it belongs to believe that the Son of God, the Lord, shall come to judge the world—that He who has already come has been born according to His Human Nature of Mary the Virgin."[1]

Through clinging, even passionately, to this one Faith, and through this one Faith alone, can we hope to preserve our souls from the darkness of the intellect which is darker, far, than the darkness of any earthly night—from a sense of dereliction bringing in its sombre train the desolation of despair.

---

[1] *Con. Don.*, I. I.

The Virgin-Mother also the Holy Mother of God.

Moreover, Catholics believe not only that our Lady is the Virgin Mother of God, but also that, in virtue of His Grace, she is God's Holy Mother. The extrinsic gifts of Immaculate Conception and Divine Motherhood were bestowed upon Mary—gifts which are hers alone so that no other being can in these things imitate her; but the intrinsic adornments of sanctity are also hers in fullest measure, and here we all, at however great a distance, may follow after her, for growth in sanctity depends solely, in every creature, upon the co-operation of human free will with divine grace. "Mary conceived Christ by faith in her heart," writes St. Augustine, "before she conceived Him in her womb." So we read that St. Elisabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, greeted the Holy Virgin as Blessed, expressly on this double ground: "She cried out with a loud voice, Blessed art thou amongst women and Blessed is the Fruit of thy womb (Blessed art thou in thy Motherhood). . . . Blessed art thou that hast believed, because these things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord (Blessed art thou in thy faith)." In truth Mary was rather blessed in that she believed, than because wondrous things were accomplished in her by the Lord, when the Holy Ghost overshadowed her and she became Mother of God—since the blessing which springs from that which is inward and spiritual, is of a higher order than that which is external and physical. It may, however, be well to observe that we should be careful not to separate even mentally, the grace and dignity which were inseparably conjoined in the person of the Holy Mother of God.

If we may be allowed for a moment to illustrate that which is heavenly by that which is earthly—we may imagine a child catching a glimpse of the gracious presence of our Queen-Mother, and overcome with the thought of her greatness, exclaiming aloud: "Oh! how wonderful! How marvellous a dignity! To be the mother of England's King!" And, listening the while a wise teacher might make answer: "Yes, but rather think of her goodness. Happier far that she is venerated by her people for her virtues, that her children rise up and call her blessed, than for her high estate." One who should thus speak, would wish to turn the thoughts of the child from that which he could not imitate, to that from which he might learn, to his lasting welfare. He would be far from desiring to detract in aught from the honour which no sane man can doubt rightly attaches to the King's Mother. In this manner we may well believe would the Queen herself be the first to speak.

Thus even our Lord, when once He was called "Good Master," drove home the lesson: "Why callest thou Me good? There is none good, save God only." It is idle to praise Christ, unless we praise Him as the Lord our God, unless we beg Him to give us of that goodness of which He is the only Fount. Again, when women wept with compassion during His sorrowful Passion, our Lord asked them: "Why weep ye for Me? Weep rather for yourselves and for your children." Idle are tears shed even for the Passion of Christ, should they spring merely from empty sentiment—unless they lead us to hate and fight against that sin in ourselves and round about us, to which the Passion of Christ is due. Similarly, when the woman cried out from the crowd, blessing the physical maternity of Mary—the womb that bore our Lord, the paps that gave Him suck—for the mother is rightly honoured in her son[1]—He answered, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it"—This is the maternity which is spiritual; in this may we all bear Him anew, as His Mother bore Him of old when she kept all His words in her heart.[2] "Even my Mother," paraphrases St. Augustine, "is happy in that she keeps the Word of God."[3]

> "In all truth," writes the Venerable Bede, "are they blessed who hear the Word of God and keep it. Beautifully does the Saviour assent to the woman's witness, when He declared that not only the Mother who had deigned to give birth physically to the Word of God, but they who, by the hearing of faith, conceive the same Word spiritually, and by

---

[1] *Cf.* pp. 514-515.

[2] Luke ii. 51.

[3] In *S. Joan*, Tr. x. 3.

> good works strive to bear Him, and, as it were, nourish Him in their own hearts and in the hearts of their neighbours, are blessed; for the Mother of God herself was indeed blessed in that she was made, in time, the minister of the Incarnation of the Word, but far more blessed in that she guarded His Love—for all eternity."[1]

Indeed it is right and seemly to dwell, with the Saints, on our Blessed Lady's unique dignity in that ineffable Maternity in which none of us can have any lot or share, but, if we listen, we may hear her gentle voice repeating the warning of her Divine Son: Remember, rather, that blessedness of which you too may have your appointed part, the blessedness that comes to all who strive to do the Will of God. "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it. Who are My Mother and My Brethren? They who do the Will of my Father; they are My Mother and My Brethren."[2]

> "Therefore also Mary," is the comment of St. Augustine, "because she did the Will of the Father. What the Lord magnified in her was that she did the Father's Will, rather than that flesh gave birth to Flesh."[3]

Some of the Fathers of the Church find mystical meanings hidden in these passages, pointing out, for example, with St. Ambrose, that:

---

[1] Lib. IV., cap. xlix., *In Luc.* 11.

[2] *Cf.* pp. 236-237.

[3] In *Joan*, Tr. x. 3.

> "The Teacher of Morals, who proposes Himself as an example to others, and is Himself the Teacher, also observes His own precepts. For before enjoining on others that he who leaves not his father and mother is not worthy of the Son of God, first in His own person He subjects Himself to this sentence, not that thereby He would renounce the duties of filial piety to His Mother, for it is His own command: 'He who honoureth not his father or mother shall die the death,'[1] but because He knows that He owes more to the Mysteries of His Father than to His affection towards His Mother. Herein, however, there is no wrongful forsaking of parents, when spiritual relationships are shown to be more sacred than those which are bodily."[2]

But, ordinarily, the Fathers are content to lay stress on the moral lesson on which I have already dwelt. Thus St. Augustine:

> "What in fact, did their relationship benefit His brethren, that is, His kinsmen according to the flesh, who believed not in Him? So too, even the relationship of Mother would have profited Mary nothing, had she not also more blessedly borne Christ in her heart than in her flesh. . . . There is, then, no reason why the virgins of God should be sad, because they too cannot, preserving their virginity, become mothers of flesh. For virginity could, befittingly, bring forth Him only who could have no one like unto Him in His birth. Nevertheless, that childbirth of one Holy Virgin is the glory of all holy virgins. And they too are, with

---

[1] Ex. xx. 12, xxi. 15; Deut. xxvii. 16.

[2] St. Ambrose, *Expos. in Luc.*, Lib. VI. 36-38.

> Mary, Mothers of Christ, if they do His Father's Will. For in this, even Mary is with greater praise and blessedness Christ's Mother, according to the sentence: 'Whoso doth the will of My Father who is in Heaven the same is My brother and sister and mother.' All these relationships to Himself He sets forth spiritually in the people whom He has redeemed. He has holy men and holy women as His brethren and sisters, since they are co-heirs with Him in the heavenly inheritance. The whole Church is His mother, because she, it is, who most assuredly brings forth His members, that is, His Faithful, by the Grace of God. His mother too, is every pious soul that does His Father's will by most fruitful charity in those to whom she gives birth, until Christ be formed in them. Hence Mary, in doing God's Will, is bodily only Christ's Mother, but spiritually both sister and mother.
>
> "Hence it follows that this One Woman alone is not only in spirit but also in body, both Mother and Virgin."[1]

And again, addressing virgins, Augustine writes:

> "Holy virginity of body brings with it fruitfulness of soul. . . . What you wonder at with admiration in the flesh of Mary, reproduce in the hiding-places of your soul. Whoso believes in the heart unto justice, conceives Christ; whoso confesses unto salvation, brings forth Christ."[2]

All Christians must needs be careful lest their praise of our Lord as Good, their compassion with

---

[1] *De Sacra Virginitate*, n. iii.

[2] Serm. 191, *De Nat. Dom.*, viii., n. 1-4.

Him in His Adorable Passion, or their veneration of His Mother become something that is otiose and sterile. The supernatural operations of the soul are intended by God to be fruitful in good works.

Meanwhile if the Arian or the Protestant, forgetful of the balance of Scripture, ignoring the warning of the Prince of the Apostles,[1] despising the testimony of the Ancient Fathers, repudiating the teaching of the Church, pervert such sayings of Christ as those which we have been considering, as though they conflicted with the Godhead of our Lord, or were derogatory to the honour due from men to His Blessed Mother, whilst this fact will not fail to grieve us, in no way can it surprise us. Who is ignorant that heresy has perverted God's words from the beginning? Rather should the sight of such miseries establish Catholic Christians the more solidly in that Faith which embraces all aspects of truth in one majestic harmony.

---

[1] 2 Peter iii. 16.

CHAPTER IV

MARY, MOTHER OF CHRISTIANS

Gaude, turba fidelium,
mentis colens martyrium,
eius, quæ dedit Filium
in mortem pro miseris. . . .
Datur Mater Discipulo
cum maximo mysterio ;
Joannis sub vocabulo
quivis venit Fidelis.

Ex Hymnis Latinis Mediae Ætatis.[1]

Our Blessed Lady is the Mother of the Word made Flesh—His Mother in the physical order that has been established by God. As we read in the Holy Gospel, she is the Mother of Jesus. In the spiritual order she is the mother, not of our Lord (to whom solely she herself owes her being and all that she possesses), but of Christians—and this, not figuratively, but actually by a veritable maternity.

This is true, in the first place because Christians are the brothers and sisters of Christ her Son. All

---

[1] *Gall. Moret.*, n. 152.

The Brothers and Sisters of Christ.

men are the children of God by nature, for all men are the work of His Hands, fashioned by His Power and Wisdom. Christians are also the children of God by grace. "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent His Son, made of a Woman, made under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."[1] We have received the adoption of sons of God through Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God, who was "made of a Woman" in the Human Nature which He deigned to receive from the Mother of whom He was "made." As Man, He was enabled to become the true Brother of all who believe in His Name. "Go and tell My Brethren," are our Lord's own words spoken of His Disciples.[2] He who is Mary's Son—as truly Mary's Son as He is the Son of God—calls us His Brethren. *Sumus quod nominamur.* We are that which we are called by God. We *are* His Brethren. Therefore it follows strictly that His Father is our Father, and that His Mother is our mother too. Having received the adoption of sons, we can cry Abba, Father. We poor sinners may venture to look up to Heaven and call the great God, our Father. When thus we dare to pray to "Our Father who art in Heaven," not only are we "strengthened by His precept," for

---

[1] Gal. iv. 4, 6.

[2] Matt. xxviii. 10.

He has commanded us thus to pray, but we also "fashion ourselves on His example"—the example of our Brother.[1] As our Brother prayed to His Father, so should we pray to our Father. This is the meaning of Brotherhood—our Brother's Father is our Father too. By a parity of reasoning our Brother's Mother is also our mother. Otherwise, all falls to the ground. We are not truly His brethren, unless His Mother be our mother, even as His Father is our Father. For Christians, the Motherhood of Mary depends upon the same great principle as the Fatherhood of God. If any man will deny that Mary is the Mother of Christians, he must deny also either that Mary is truly the Mother of Christ, or that Christians are truly Christ's Brethren. If in truth Christ is our Brother, and if in truth Mary is His Mother, then the Mother of our Brother is our mother, given to us, as she was given to our Divine Brother, by His and our Father in Heaven, to bestow upon us, as of old she bestowed upon Him, a mother's love, a mother's care. This is a wonderful thought. The more we ponder it, the more wonderful, but also the more clear it becomes. Our Lord by His Brotherhood has given us a share in His Divine Sonship. Henceforth we are the adopted sons of God. He has also given us a place by His side in His human Mother's heart. We are the children of Mary, for our Brother is Mary's Child.

---

[1] The Priest at Mass, before the *Pater Noster*, is directed thus to use these words: "Præceptis salutaribus moniti et divina institutione formati audemus dicere: Pater Noster."

My readers may like to make their own, a beautiful prayer of St. Anselm, once Archbishop of Canterbury:

> "O my Queen! God has made thee His Mother, that thou mightest become the mother of all who believe in Him. Accept, then, O most Blessed Virgin, for thy children all those whom thy dear Son was not ashamed to call His Brothers."[1]

The Members of the Body of Christ.

Our Blessed Lord is not our Brother only. He is also our Head and we are Members of His Body. With this thought before his mind, St. Augustine, having pointed out that Mary "is not only in spirit, but also in body, both Mother and Virgin," proceeds as follows:

> "Yet she is not indeed Mother in spirit of our Head, who is the Saviour Himself—of whom rather spiritually she is born, because all who believe in Him (amongst whom she too is) are rightly called children of the Bridegroom—but, clearly, she is Mother of His Members—that is of us, since by her charity she co-operated that the Faithful should be born in the Church—and they are members of that Head. But, corporally, she is Mother of the Head Himself."[2]

Corporally, we are not her children, and cannot be. She has but one Child, who is the Fruit of her womb. His Name is Jesus. On the other hand, spiritually, she cannot be His Mother—rather she is, from this point of view, His Daughter. Spiritually barren, however, she can never be, for charity is ever a fruitful mother, and she is the Queen of Charity. By her charity Mary co-operated in the Redemption of the world—giving her consent to the Incarnation, and standing beneath the Cross—in this manner undoing the work of Eve. Thus does she become spiritually the mother of the Members of her Son. When by Baptism we became Members of His Body, we were made in Christ, not only sons of God, but also children of the Mother of our Head. Such is the thought of the great Augustine. We dare not divide Christ. The One Christ, who is God, is the Head of the Body of which we are members. Consequently the Mother of God is the Mother of the members of His Body.

---

[1] S. Anselmi, *Orat.*, 47 et 49.

[2] *De Sancta Virginitate*, n. 6.

Similarly, St. Epiphanius:

> "Mary is signified by Eve, who received in figure the appellation of Mother of all the living. For Eve was called Mother of the Living, even after, subsequently to the transgression, she had heard the words: 'Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.' It is, indeed, a marvel that after the Fall she had this great title bestowed upon her. True it is that according to the exterior the whole race of man upon earth has been born from this Eve, but in reality it is from Mary that Life is truly born to the world, so that by giving birth to the Living One, Mary might also become the Mother of all the Living. Thus, then, in a mystical sense Mary is called Mother of the Living."[1]

[1] *Hær.*, lxxviii. 19.

We may observe, that to the mind of Epiphanius, the mystical (spiritual) maternity whereby Mary becomes the Mother of all the Living—that is of all who receive the Divine Life of Christ in Baptism—transcends our exterior (corporal) descent from our first parents. It creates a bond and kinship not of the body, but of the soul. That which is above nature must ever surpass that which is purely according to nature. It belongs to a higher order. It is from our human mother that we have received corporal life; our mother Mary bestowed upon us spiritual life when she bore and gave us Jesus our Lord, who is our Life.

We may also quote St. Ambrose:

> "Christ before the Virgin—Christ from the Virgin—born indeed of the Father before all ages, but born of the Virgin for the sake of the ages. . . . A Virgin therefore it is who has borne us in her womb, a Virgin who has brought us forth, a Virgin who has nourished us with her own milk, of whom we read: 'How great things has the Virgin Jerusalem wrought."[1]

The Virgin, then, brought us forth spiritually in Christ her Son as His Members, and still discharges the offices of a mother to us her children, nourishing us mystically with her milk, lavishing on us a mother's care—a mother's love.

The Abbott Guarric, a disciple of St. Bernard, applies to the Blessed Virgin the prophecy of Isaias: "Thou shalt no more be called Forsaken, and thy land shall no more be called Desolate . . . for thy children shall dwell in thee."[1] He continues thus:

---

[1] *De Officiis Ministrorum*, 46, i., cap. v. 22.

> "Why, O heretic, dost thou raise up thy head? Why dost thou snatch the mystery of piety to turn it into an occasion of thine unbelief? One indeed she bore, who, as He is the Only Son of His Father in Heaven, so is He the Only Son of His Mother upon the earth. For she did not, as thou dost wickedly blaspheme, afterwards bear other sons; but the seal of stainless virginity in the Mother remained as the Mystery of Catholic Unity shown forth in her Son. Yet, she, the only Virgin Mother, whose glory it is to have given birth to the Only Begotten of the Father, embraces this her Only Son in all His Members, and is not ashamed to be called the mother of all those in whom she knows that Christ, her Son, has been formed already or is now being formed on earth."[2]

The Gift from the Cross.

Furthermore, commenting on the words "Behold Thy Son," Origen wrote as follows:

> "We may venture to say that the flower of all the Scriptures are the Gospels, and the flower of the Gospels is that according to John—the sense of which no one is able to receive who has not reclined upon the Breast of Jesus, or who has not received from Jesus Mary to be his mother also. Yea, such and so great must he needs become, who

---

[1] Is. lxii. 4, 5.

[2] *In Assumptione B. Mariæ*, Serm. i. 2

> is to be another John, since he too must be shown by Jesus to be Jesus, as was John.[1] For, if in the judgment of those whose sentiments are sound concerning Mary, there be no Son of Mary save Jesus, and if Jesus said to His Mother, 'Behold thy Son'—not 'Behold he too is thy Son'—it is the same as though He said: 'Behold he is Jesus whom thou didst bring forth.' For whosoever is Perfect, he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him—and since Christ lives in him, of him it is said to Mary: 'Behold thy Son—the Christ.'"[2]

Mary, then, according to Origen, was from the Cross constituted Mother of the Perfect. This distinction between "the Perfect" and ordinary Christians is constantly insisted upon by Origen.[3] It need not detain us here. What is of interest is, to find that in the schools of Alexandria, in the third century, the idea was already in no way strange that when our Lady received John to be her son, she received not John alone—so that a Christian, who desired to enter deeply into the Mysteries of the Gospel, must recognise this truth and "receive from Jesus Mary to be his mother also."

But our Lady is not the mother of "the Perfect" only. She is the mother of all those in whose souls already the Image of her Son has in any degree been formed. St. Ephrem calls her "the Mother of all."

---

[1] *I.e.*, John "was shown by Jesus *to be Jesus*," when he was made, like Jesus, Mary's son.

[2] Com., *In Joan.*, T. i., n. 6.; P.G. xiv., p. 29.

[3] *Cf.* p. 15.

> "Hail, Mother of all. Hail Fountain of Grace and the Solace of all. Hail refuge and hospice of sinners. Hail Mercy-seat of the afflicted. Hail place of sanctuary in Jerusalem. Hail most gracious Throne of our Creator."[1]

I need not then wait to be amongst "the Perfect," before, with John, I receive Mary to be my mother. It suffices that I yearn for her "Grace" and beseech her "Solace." It is enough that I own myself to be a sinner, to find "refuge" in her mother's heart; enough to know myself to be afflicted, to find "Mercy" before her "Throne," which once was constituted the Throne of the Creator. She has in truth been set up as a place of sanctuary in Jerusalem—the City of Peace—the Church of the Living God.

The Words from the Cross.

The Evangelists have preserved Seven Words, as they are called—seven short sentences spoken by our Divine Lord during the great Three Hours when He hung dying upon the Cross. Seven times His Voice broke the silence during His Dread Agony. Before He spoke of the Thirst of His Soul and Body, and of the mysterious dereliction of His Spirit, before He declared that He had fulfilled the work that His

---

[1] *Threni. B.V.M. Op. Gr. et Lat.*, Tom. iii., p. 575.

Father had given Him to do, and gave up the Ghost into His Father's Hands, He was mindful of the needs of men. The first three Words of Christ spoken from the Cross agree in this, that in each case they have an immediate application, and that in each case they are intended to reach the hearts of men as long as the world shall last.

"*Father forgive them, they know not what they do*" —this prayer was offered first for those who did our Blessed Lord to death and were directly responsible for the Crucifixion. But to the end of time all sinful men and women may find supreme consolation, when they remember that the dying Saviour pleaded for them from His Cross of pain—nay more, that He deigned to make excuse on their behalf. The Jews knew not what they did. The full extent of their malice was not before their minds when they clamoured for God's Blood, and spat in His Face, and crowned Him with the mock Crown of Royalty, and drove the nails into His Hands, and tore His bleeding Feet, and fastened Him to His hard deathbed. Not only those who actually joined in His Passion—but we too, poor sinners, who, though we were not physically present on Mount Calvary, have crucified our Lord anew by wilful sin, may remember, to our soul's comfort, that we also were included in that merciful prayer of Christ: "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," and may take heart to pray to God for Mercy through Jesus Christ

His Son our Lord. "We have a High Priest who hath compassion on our infirmities, who, in the days of His Flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications, is entered into Heaven itself, that He may appear now in that Presence of God for us."[1] The Heart of Christ still pleads with God on behalf of sinful men. "They cannot perish," writes St. Bernard, "for whom the Son entreats that they perish not--on whose behalf the Father has given His Son to death that they may live."[2]

"*This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*" This Word was spoken immediately to the Good Thief who, after a life of crime, acknowledged and confessed his misdeeds: "These things we suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds"; and cried to Jesus: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." But in every age all have a share in the wondrous promise made to the Good Thief, who, like the Thief, seek pardon, where pardon can never be sought in vain, from the Heart of the world's Redeemer. He will remember us too when He cometh into His Kingdom, and will give us a place in the Paradise of God.

"*Behold thy mother.*" These words were spoken immediately to the Disciple whom Jesus loved—to that disciple who, listening, tells us himself that from that hour he took Mary to his heart and home

---

[1] Heb. iv. 15; v. 7; ix. 24.

[2] Hom. III., *In Luc.*, cap. i., vv. 28-32. xiv.

The grant of Mary to John was a personal grant, as was the grant of Paradise to Dismas. The Fathers of the Church insist upon the fact that here we have proof that "the brethren of the Lord," of whom we read in the Gospels, were not the sons of Mary, for had they been such, to one of them would have fallen the care of the Blessed Mother; also they remind us of the fitness of the choice of John, beloved because of his exquisite purity. Before He left the earth, our Divine Redeemer had two treasures dear above all others to His Sacred Heart—His Mother and His Church. This great inheritance He divided between two men. The Church of Christ was left to the care of Peter who denied his Lord thrice, with cursing and swearing, for in every age the Holy Church was to be the sinners' home and the sinners' friend[1]—but the sinless Mother of Christ was bequeathed not to Peter, the repentant sinner, but to John the innocent, *Virgo virginum virgini commendatur*. The Virgin of all virgins was entrusted to the virgin youth, whom Jesus loved with a special love. The Church to Peter; Mary to John.

Yet, the special relation of the Beloved Disciple to the Virgin Mother, which no Christian could wish to minimise, need in no way obscure the fact that the words of the dying Christ include something more general than the commendation of our Lady to the care of His Apostle. "The occasion is too important, and the hour too solemn, for these words not to possess a higher meaning. Jesus beholds near Him the Mother of mankind, and by her side the pure and loving disciple."[1] St. John is a figure and type of all disciples, who, redeemed by His Blood, should own our Lord to be their Master.

---

[1] *Cf.* St. Optatus, *Cont. Don.*, vii. 3.: "Peccator accipit claves . . . provisum est ut peccator aperiret peccatoribus, ne innocentes clauderent contra peccatores."

All Christians have their share not only in the prayer of Christ for those who willed His Death, not only in the promises of Christ to the repentant thief, but also in the grant of Christ to His chosen Disciple: "Behold thy Mother." When Mary heard the Word of Christ: "Behold thy Son," she beheld John with the eyes of her body, faithful by her side beneath the Cross, but who will dare deny that in the person of John, she received as her children, all those in every age who, with John, should call her Mother?

It is the case that no one of the Fathers in his extant writings, when commenting on the words *Behold thy Son*, understands all Christians to be thereby included. George of Nicomedia in the ninth century makes our Lord say to His Blessed Mother: "Through him [St. John] I commit to thy care My other disciples. . . . Be thou to them that which mothers are wont to be to their sons—rather, that which I should be were I with them still, and they shall offer to thee the duties of sons and subjects."[1] I think, however, that here the reference is only to the disciples of Christ who were alive at the time.

---

[1] Fr. De la Broise, S.J., *La Ste. Vierge*, p. 197.

But it is possible to glean in the field of the Holy Scriptures ears of corn that have escaped the hands of the Fathers, and, provided our gleanings be in accordance with the Analogy of the Faith and the Mind of the Church, we do well thus to glean. The Holy Fathers often insisted themselves that there were many mystical, but true, meanings yet to be discovered by patient search beneath the letter of Divine Scripture.

From the tone of their writings we may gather that they would have welcomed the more extended interpretation of our Lord's Words, had it occurred to them, as it was in fact welcomed by Catholics so soon as it was suggested. Since the Middle Ages it has become the common interpretation and was taught, amongst many others, by St. Antoninus,[2] St. Thomas of Villanova,[3] and St. Bernadine of Siena.[4] Later on it has been preached by St. Francis de Sales,[5] St. Alphonsus,[6] and St. Leonard of Port Maurice,[7] and defended by such theologians as Pesch, Hurter, and Billot. It has also been proclaimed in Encyclicals by Popes Benedict XIV,[1] Pius VIII,[2] and Leo XIII, who thus expresses the teaching that is now familiar to all Catholics: "In John, Christ designated the human race, especially those who had joined themselves to Him by Faith."[3]

---

[1] Oratio viii., *In S. Mariam assistentem Cruci;* P.G., p. 1476.

[2] *IV. P. Summæ Theolog.*, lit. 15, c. 2, t. iv.

[3] *In Fest. Natal. Dom.*, Conc. 6, n. 5, etc.

[4] *De Pass. Dni, feria* vi.; *post Dom. Olivar.*, etc.

[5] Tom. ix. *Edit. d'Annecy.*, p. 276.

[6] *Clock of the Passion*, c. 7, n. 2, etc.

[7] *La Via del Paradiso.*

We believe, then, that we are the children of Mary, because we are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, because we are the Members of His Body, and because we are His disciples and listen to our Master's Voice. In believing that the Mother of our Lord is, in a real sense, our spiritual mother, God's Church assures us that we do not deceive our souls, since the Church encourages all her children to call themselves also the children of the Mother of God, to love her with filial love, and expect from her a mother's offices. The Motherhood of Mary is twofold. She is the Mother of God All-Holy. She is also the mother of sinful men. She is the Mother of the Redeemer. She is also the mother of the redeemed.

A Mother's Love.

God is wont to deal with His rational creatures, both in the natural and in the supernatural order, by means of secondary causes. We are members one of another and are continually reminded that we depend one upon another in the most intimate relations of life. These relations have been established from above, and woe betide any man who is foolish enough to endeavour to put them on one side. Amongst these various human relations none is closer in its bond, none more evidently coming from the Divine Will, than is that existing between a mother and her child. Men may marvel at a woman's maternal love ; they can hardly hope to gauge its mystery. We are content to know that the Creator, who has given to all His creatures an instinctive love of offspring, leading even the wildest of beasts to guard and providently care for her young, has implanted in the heart of the human mother a love that reaches to the needs of her children both in soul and body. A mother's love is perhaps not the strongest, but it is undoubtedly the most gentle, the most tender, the most compassionate affection known upon our earth. Now, when God determined, in His wondrous Love for men, that His Son should enter into their life, He was to share the close human relationships which are common to us all. In the deepest sense He must stand alone, as every man must needs be alone in the mysterious depths of his spirit ; yet for thirty years He was to have a home, friends, disciples, a native land. Beyond all, a Mother was chosen to minister to His needs. That Mother's heart was so fashioned by God, that, from its fountains, her Divine Son should receive all the wealth of affection which it was fitting that He should receive, at least from one creature—the creature of His predilection. The relation of mother and son, always sacred, reaches its apogee in the highest perfection that can be conceived when Mary is the Mother and Jesus is the Son. The love of a mother is unlike all other love, and the crown of the love of mothers is the love of Mary the Mother of Jesus.

---

[1] Bulla *Gloriosæ Dominæ*.
[2] Bulla *Præstantissimum*.
[3] *Encycl.*, September 5, 1895.

Mary is blessed amongst all women. Of all women she is the tenderest, the most understanding, the gentlest, the most full of sympathy and compassion, the most exquisitely womanly—this primarily for the sake of her Son. When she smiled upon Him at Bethlehem, the Heavens, rapt in wonder, gazed upon a perfect Mother's smile; when she clasped her Child to her heart at Nazareth, it was the embrace of the Angels' Queen, giving their Lord a love denied to the capacity of angelic nature; when she stood beneath His Cross on Calvary, by her side knelt the Magdalen who loved our Lord most dearly—yet the love of Mary of Magdala could be only as water is to wine, when measured by the love of Mary His Mother.

We must ever bear in mind that there are not two Blessed Virgins, one the Mother of God, the other the mother of men; neither has the one Virgin Mary two hearts, with one of which she may love Jesus her Firstborn, whilst with the other she may love the Brethren of Jesus. She loves us with the same tenderness, with the same understanding, with the same faithfulness, with the same mother's love with which she loved our Lord, as her Child, on earth. For this was she made by God all that she is —in the first place no doubt for the sake of Christ, from her incarnate, but also for the sake of all those for whom Christ should die. His Mother is our mother. He gave us none other than His own —one, surely, of the most sacred and touching of His gifts. It is this fact—that we know her to be our mother, bestowed upon us as such by our Elder Brother, made by God so unutterably loving for our sake too, as well as for His own, that gives Catholics an ease and confidence, a happiness, a feeling of being at home with our Lady which none but Catholics can ever understand. Even in the schismatic East, where boundless is the veneration for the august Mother of God, this childlike feeling seems to be somewhat wanting in the devotion of the people. Eastern schismatics vie with Catholics in the titles of honour they lavish upon Mary Most Holy; they constantly chant her praises in their churches, and are wont to seek her intercession in the various needs of life. But rarely, if ever, do they call her, as Catholics love to call her, *our* Lady, *our* mother. With them she is the Great Lady, raised high above the Cherubim and the Seraphim; with us she is that indeed, but we love to remember (what Eastern schismatics would never deny, though they seem to forget it strangely in practice) that she is also the dear mother who rejoices to know that we are her children. She is crowned in high Heaven, but she is also throned in our hearts on earth, for we know that we can trust her always to care for us, even as in the days of His weakness she cared for her Child Jesus. As she was true to Him, so—if we will but believe it—will she be true to us in all our anxieties, in all our miseries, in every moment of life—even to the end.

After the Love of God from whom all pure love springs, there can be no love like to the love of Mary, as there is no constancy like to Mary's. Its depth and magnitude are beyond the power of human words to reach, beyond all human comprehension. It lies, however, within the experience of us all, for to all God has given this Mother of Fair Love. To each one He says: "Ecce mater tua."

"He said to the Disciple whom He loved: Behold thy mother. And from that hour the Disciple took her to his own."

CHAPTER V

MARY, THE MOTHER OF THE MAN OF SORROWS

Stabat Mater dolorosa
iuxta crucem lacrymosa,
dum pendebat Filius.

Our Lady is near to Christ and like to Christ. She is near to Christ, for she is *His* Mother. She is like to Christ, for she is the Mother of Mercy—her heart overflowing with compassion for the miseries of men. She is *our* mother.

The Passion of Jesus and the Compassion of Mary.

In no way are this nearness and this likeness to her Divine Son manifested more convincingly than in the immensity of Mary's sorrows. The Eternal God bore our griefs and sins upon the Cross; beneath the Cross during three long hours stood, heartbroken, His human Mother, the Virgo Dolorosa. In His own person our Lord has experienced to the uttermost all that man is capable of enduring; our Lady's soul a sword has pierced that "out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed."[1] Kneeling not only before the Crucifix, but also before the image of the Sorrowful Mother with her dead Child in her arms, long generations of Christian mourners have found the only consolation worthy of the name upon this earth — the consolation which comes from the Mysteries of the Christian Faith.

---

[1] Luke ii. 35.

The sorrows of human life.

How often have not men. watching the agony that is round about them, sometimes torn asunder by the agony that is lacerating their own souls within them, been tempted to ask the question: "If God loves, how is it possible that He does not suffer too, as He beholds the manifold sufferings of the children of men?" Sometimes the woe seems to reach a monstrous climax, as in the course of a great war—when it appears like to some unreal nightmare, though we know it in fact to be most real, from which we can only turn away our eyes or we should faint with horror at the hideous sight.

Never can sorrow altogether be absent from any life. In pain we all enter the world, in pain we say our last farewell to the things of time. The sorrows of humanity encompass us and beset our course as we travel from the cradle to eternity: "Man born of woman, living but a short time, is filled with many miseries."[1] Who will gainsay it? As the world grows older, the sob of humanity which finds expression in its earliest literature, loses nought of its over-

[1] Job xiv. 1.

whelming pathos. The Book of Job, as regards its essential heart-ache, might have been written yesterday. The burden of the world becomes no lighter as the shadows lengthen and mankind advances to the eventide. Is there then no remedy? Are the burdens in truth unbearable? Does not God care?

To such questions as these Christianity, and Christianity alone, claims to afford an answer. There *is* a remedy. The burdens can all be made tolerable, can be lightened, until (strange paradox) an unearthly joy is found in the bearing even of the heaviest burdens, since God does care, and has Himself borne our burdens in His own Body as though they were in truth His own. The burden of her Child was the joy of Mary's life as she carried Him in her arms; the burden of His Cross flooded our Saviour's Soul with sunshine as He toiled up the Hill of Calvary. Even so, in some measure and degree, may it be with us if we will but believe practically in our Religion.

All this, however, is a lesson very hard to learn.

The Love of God proved by the sufferings of Christ.

God is a Spirit, and (to use the language of theology) a Pure Act incapable of change. As such, He cannot suffer in His Divine Nature. But, as the only means of making us understand a real truth, it is said of Him in Holy Scripture, making use of analogy and metaphor, that He grieved, repented, was angered, rejoiced, and the like. Using then feeble human words, we say rightly that, beholding the sufferings of man, He grieved. It is certain that He determined Himself to share those sufferings both in Soul and Body. To effect this God assumed human nature—taking a Body that should be capable of enduring pain—together with a Soul that should be afflicted even as we are afflicted. This He did freely and out of love. The Father so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son. In the recesses of the Divine Nature—so we dare to write (once more employing human language)—the Gift of God involved a sacrifice. Far less can we fathom such a mystery as this, than a worm could hope to understand the mysteries of the human heart. We know this much at least, that thus to give—as God gave—unstintingly was not without its cost. The Father gave His Son. The Son, hastening to do His Father's Will, emptied Himself—that is, shrouded His Godhead, that He might give Himself to man. The Holy Spirit rejoiced at the Gift—the Gift poured out through love, binding that which had been broken, renewing human hearts and lives—by means of which He might sanctify their souls. "Through the tender mercy of our God, *whereby* the Dayspring from on high hath visited us."

God became Man and in His Human Nature did that which was impossible for the Divine Nature to accomplish. To show sympathy with men, He entered into human relations, each one of which involved the keenest suffering. He spared Himself nothing. He suffered in the sufferings of His Mother, of His Apostles, of His Friends in all the ages which already He foresaw. He wept over the doom of Jerusalem, the City of His predilection—He shed tears over the grave of Lazarus. When He loved His own He loved them unto the end, and in the end He died upon the Cross. The Everlasting Son, who is the First-born of every creature, in His self-sacrificing love is "the express Image" of the Invisible God.[1]

On the dread sufferings of Christ in detail, I shall not linger, for they do not belong to the scope of this book. They are to be read of in the Holy Scriptures of our religion, which tell us in inspired words concerning the Passion of Christ—a Passion which began with the first moment of the Incarnation, and ended only when with a loud cry our Lord bent His Head and surrendered His Soul into His Father's Hands. To the end of time the Gospels and the Crucifix will prove that God cares for men—He has even found a way to endure and share all the sufferings of man to their last limit and extremity.

"Father, if it be possible let this Chalice pass from me," was the cry wrung from the bitterness of the Soul of Christ beneath the olive-trees in the Garden of His Agony—a cry uttered aloud to teach us something of the agony He then endured—not a petition to be granted by His Father, for it was carefully guarded and strictly limited by absolute submission. Our divine Saviour knew that it was not possible for that Chalice to pass, if His Father's Will (springing from the Father's Love)—which was His Will too—should be done as in Heaven, so on earth—on that earth upon which, even as He cried aloud in dread, the sweat of His fear was falling. These are high Mysteries. Suffice it for us to know that He who had compassion on the multitude, also loved, suffered, gave up the ghost, for the love of every individual soul. "He hath loved *me* and hath delivered Himself up for *me*." Yes, God does care, for our Lord Jesus Christ has proved that He cares, and our Lord Jesus Christ is God.

---

[1] *Cf.* Col. i. 15.

But, if the sufferings of Christ had stood alone, in the sense that no creatures could in any manner have lot or part in those solitary sufferings, a great temptation might well have beset us. We might have been tempted to say (as in fact many outside the Unity of the Church do say even now): "Christ my Lord has died for me. He alone is my Redeemer. By His Death He has atoned for my sins. Why then should I suffer now?"

The sufferings of Christians.

To this the Catholic Faith makes answer. In the highest sense our Lord did indeed suffer alone, in unutterable solitariness. "He trod the wine-press alone and there was no man with Him." Most truly He is our only Saviour; most truly has He atoned perfectly for all our sins. Yet, it is equally true that His servants may—and if they may, they should—nay they needs must, for such is His Will—have their share in the sufferings of Christ. We are the members of His Body. Without Good Friday there could have been for our Lord no Easter Morning. It is then only just and fitting that if we are to share in His Resurrection, it should be asked of us too that in some small measure we should first share in His Passion.

"Dearly beloved," writes the Prince of the Apostles, "think not strange the burning heat which is to try you as if some new thing were happening to you. But if you partake of the sufferings of Christ, rejoice that when His glory shall be revealed you may also be glad with exceeding joy; wherefore let them also that suffer according to the Will of God, commend their souls in good deed to the faithful Creator."[1]

The Cross is the ladder by which it is easy to climb to Heaven. Even as Simon of Cyrene, privileged to help our Redeemer bear His heavy burden, when he touched the wood of the Holy Cross, became a Saint, so shall it be with all, who taking up every cross which Christ shall offer them, do Him like service. As men watch Christ on His way to Calvary, either they jeer with the Jews, or they stand aside indifferent, or they take Him for their Lord and Master. To His true disciples our Lord always preaches His lesson of suffering.

---

[1] 1 Peter iv. 12, 13, 19.

Suffering, we must remember, did not enter into the designs of God for man antecedently to man's sin. Adam was not created to suffer. Suffering was consequent on sin, but when sin and suffering had entered into the world, our compassionate Lord, according to His wont, brought good out of evil and made the punishment the occasion of our sanctification. So Christians, joining their relatively small sufferings to the mighty sufferings of their Saviour, pay the punishment due to their sins, merit in His sight, have the Christian character slowly formed within them, become, unconsciously to themselves, like to Christ, and even are enabled thus to satisfy God's Justice, not only for their own offences, but also for those of their friends. St. Paul, therefore, does not fear to write to the Colossians:

"I rejoice in my sufferings for you and fill up those things which are wanting in the Sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His Body's sake, which is the Church."[1]

In one sense it would be blasphemy to assert that anything can be wanting in the Sufferings of Christ. One drop of His Precious Blood is enough to redeem ten thousand worlds; yet, obviously, since God intends us to do our part, He has left us that part to do, and it remains "wanting," until we do it. The Cyrenean was intended to have his own appointed share of suffering on the road to Calvary. Christ left that share to him, for his merit and sanctification. Similarly, He leaves something to all the members of His Body, that they may fill up in their flesh that which is wanting in His sufferings—not only for their own souls' sake, but also "for His Body's sake, which is the Church." We are all called to be fellow-workers with Christ. This is the high vocation of every Christian. "By good works we may thus make our calling and election sure,"[1] solely in virtue of the union of those good works with the sufferings and the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

---

[1] Col. i. 24.

The sufferings of the Saints.

Experience teaches Christians that the nearer to Christ, the nearer to the Cross. The lives of all the Saints—differing indefinitely as they do in outward circumstances—all agree in this that, in a marked way, they share in the sufferings of Christ. This is their hall-mark. From this source they draw all their supernatural power and value. From this contact with the Cross springs all sanctity. So it follows inexorably—if none so near to our Lord as His Blessed Mother, then none so near to His Cross. If Mary shared the secrets of His Heart as could none other, then in a measure far beyond all others must she share His sufferings. It was not deemed fitting that bodily illness, which is the direct result of sin, should be hers,[1] or that she should die a violent death, but in mystical suffering, in sufferings of the soul far more poignant than those of the body—sufferings which react upon the body and rack its sensitive nerves with anguish—she was to endure beyond all other creatures. Beyond all others, she was destined to be a fellow-worker together with Christ. A larger share was to be hers than fell to any other of that which was wanting in His sufferings, to be made up by her "for His Body's sake which is the Church." Her sorrows differed not only in degree, but also in kind, from those of her children, for she alone is the Mother of the Saviour; as such, when she stood beneath the Cross she was associated, in a manner which no other can share, with the Passion of her Son.

---

[1] 2 Peter i. 10.

The sufferings of the Mother of God.

Close to the side of her Child at Bethlehem, in Egypt, and at Nazareth, our Lady, Mother of the Man and Lord of Sorrows, shrank not on Calvary's Hill from His bed of pain.

As we gaze upon Mary at the foot of the Cross we learn that it is not only the Redeemer who is called upon by God to suffer sorrow and agony of soul. Thus we take courage as we behold our Sorrowful

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 276.

Mother, knowing that she too has learned what it means to shed the tears of exceeding bitterness. "Great as the sea is Thy desolation, O Virgin Daughter of Sion. Shall there be none to comfort thee?"

Most intimately associated with the Passion of Jesus Christ is the Compassion or fellow-suffering of Mary. Who dare separate the suffering Mother from her suffering Son?

CHAPTER VI

MARY'S SORROWS

Ah, Mary, pierced with sorrow,
  Remember, reach and save
The soul that comes to-morrow
  Before the God that gave!
Since each was born of woman,
  For each at utter need—
True comrade and true foeman,
  Madonna intercede!

RUDYARD KIPLING: *Hymn before Going into Action.*

OUR Lord Jesus Christ might have redeemed the world by shedding one single tear, by one sigh of His Heart, by one act of His Will. But this, we know, was not to be. The Life of the Incarnate Word was a life of sorrow, culminating in the Mysteries of the Sacred Passion, having its term and completion in His Death upon the Cross, where He poured forth His Precious Blood to the last drop—thus paying the price which had been set by God for man's redemption. "When He loved His own, He loved them to the end"—to the last extremity. St. Alphonsus has written that our Most Holy

Redeemer endured so many distinct and separate sufferings, especially during His last days on earth, in order that we might have so many various proofs of His Love, on which to dwell in loving contemplation.

As with her Son, so too was it with His Blessed Mother. Our Lady might have known nothing of the Passion of her Beloved, before it was actually accomplished. All the future might have been hidden from her eyes until the last. And then, by one act of conformity to the Will of her Lord and God, revealed to her soul in the flash of a divine locution, the sacrifice of the Queen of Martyrs would have been consummated at the hour when Jesus died. But it was not so to be. The life of Mary, like the life of Jesus, was throughout, a life of sorrow—at least from the moment of the Incarnation—when He, in whose Face one day there should be "no beauty nor comeliness," became her Child. She "believed the report" of the Prophet.[1] Henceforth, her gaze was ever fixed upon Mount Calvary and the Sepulchre beyond. So intimately was her life interwoven with the life of Christ, that her sorrows were inseparable from His—as were also her incomparable joys. Of our Lord it had been written that His "sorrow was ever before Him,"[2] so was it with Mary. At no instant of conscious life could the Mother of the Crucified forget that which was to come. Yet, as in the life of Christ certain moments stand out in which, as it were, the rest were concentrated, in which the Son of Man stands revealed as the Man of Sorrows, wounded in the House of His friends—so too was it with our Sorrowful Queen. We sometimes see an Image of Our Lady of Sorrows, with seven swords transfixing her heart.[1] These represent the Seven Sorrows, or Dolours as they are often called, which the Church singles out from the rest, lovingly to cherish and commemorate. They commemorate the Prophecy of Simeon; The Flight into Egypt; The Loss of the Holy Child in the Temple; The Meeting with Jesus on the Way to Calvary; the Crucifixion; The Taking down from the Cross; The Burial of our Lord.

---

[1] Is. liii. 12.

[2] Ps. xxxvii. 18.

We will briefly contemplate these Mysteries.

I. SIMEON'S PROPHECY

The First Dolour.

"*But Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart . . . and after the days of her Purification, according to the Law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord.*"[2]

The Law which prescribed this offering, ordered also, that the mother "should bring a lamb of a year old to the door of the tabernacle of the testimony for a holocaust, and a young pigeon or a turtle-dove for sin and shall deliver them to the priest . . . and if her hand find not sufficiency, and she is not able to offer a lamb, she shall take two doves, or two young pigeons, one for holocaust and another for sin."[1] Our Blessed Lady's hand "did not find sufficiency," for she was poor. She offered with her Son either two doves or two young pigeons, though that Son was Lord of all. We know that Mary—the Virgin Mother—was exempt from this Law of Purification which touched her not, and Jesus, whom, in accordance with the Law, she thus presented in the Temple, was Himself the Lawgiver. Surely a Mystery is here.

---

[1] In England before the Reformation, the Heart of the Blessed Virgin was represented with *five* swords, symbolising the five Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. *Cf.* Bridgett, *Our Lady's Dowry*, p. 343.

[2] Luke ii. 19, 22.

> "It became, indeed, the Lord of the Law and of the Prophets to do all things in accordance with His own Law, and not to make void the Law, but to fulfil it; and so to connect with the passing away of the Law the beginning of His Grace. Therefore is it, that the Mother, who was superior to the Law, submitted to the Law. And she, the holy and undefiled one, observed that period of forty days that was appointed for the unclean."

Thus wrote St. Methodius at the beginning of the fourth century. Jesus and Mary would obey the Law of Moses, though in no way bound by it, until it should be abrogated—thus making a real offering of God. The offering of Jesus in the Temple was an anticipation of the Sacrifice on Mount Calvary. It was fitting that this offering should be made by the hands of Mary, in whose pure womb Jesus had first been laid as upon an altar of sacrifice—by the hands of the Immaculate Mother who had already so often offered her Child to God as He lay in her arms, or was drawn to her breast.

---

[1] Levit. xii. 6, 8.

> "Hence it was," continues Saint Methodius, "that the Ark of God [the Virgin Mother] removed from the Stable of Bethlehem . . . and rested upon the mountains of Sion; receiving into her pure bosom as upon a lofty throne—such as transcends the nature of man—the Monarch of all, she presented Him there to God the Father—the Son joint-partner of His Throne and inseparable from Him, together with that pure and undefiled Flesh, which He had assumed from her. She goes up, therefore, to the Temple—she who was more exalted than the Temple—clothed with a twofold glory—the glory of undefiled Virginity and that of ineffable Childbearing, the Benediction of the Law, and the Sanctification of Grace. . . . Tremendous, of a truth, is the Mystery connected with thee, O Virgin-Mother, thou spiritual Throne, glorified and made worthy of God."[1]

At the time when Mary, with Joseph her spouse, carried their Child into the Temple, there dwelt in Jerusalem "a man named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he had received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death, before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple."[1] Taking the Child into his arms he said: "Now dost Thou, O Lord, dismiss Thy servant according to Thy Word in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation . . . a light to lighten the Gentiles and to be the glory of Thy people Israel." Then turning to Mary, he gave utterance to these other words: "Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

---

[1] *Orat. de Simeone et Anna* II., IV.

These words of Simeon to our Lady constitute the first of her Dolours.

The Holy Mother of God knew from her study of the Hebrew Scriptures that the Messias was to be despised and rejected of men, and acquainted with infirmity, that He should be led as a sheep to the slaughter, that He should be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that the chastisement of our peace should be upon Him, that by His bruises we might be healed. Never for one moment could she have been misled by the error prevalent amongst the Jews that Shiloh, now everywhere expected, was to have on earth a reign of temporal triumph, bringing material greatness and freedom to Israel. When she bowed her head in obedience to Gabriel's message and offered her *Fiat:* "Be it done unto me according to thy word," she knew full well that the Holy One—her Child—was destined to bear the sins of men, and that His Mother must be associated with the Saviour's lot.

---

[1] Luke ii. 25, 27.

It may be, however, that perhaps our Lady sometimes wondered whether she had understood aright. There was hardly room for hesitation; yet after all . . . Thus, whilst there is any possibility of mistake, men will often hope against hope. . . . But then she heard the words of Simeon, filled with the Holy Ghost. He summed up the olden prophecies in a few terse sentences: The Child was set for the fall of some, for the resurrection of others. O! pang to His Mother's heart, He should be a sign to be contradicted—a public reproach—and a sword was to pierce through her own soul also—the sword of sorrow tearing her heart in twain. But of herself, surely she thought not then, save to bow down her will in utter conformity to the holy Will of God. As always, her thoughts were set on her Child—on that Child, whom even at that moment, Simeon was placing in her arms. During all the years that were yet to pass, whenever she should gaze upon Him, whenever she should speak to Him, whenever she thought of Him, those words would be ringing in her ears. He was to be a sign, to be spoken against and contradicted. Already, the sword had began to enter the soul of Mary—the sword of anticipation —of anticipation which she knew must be realized— not yet made specific, but on that account the more terrible, as she asked herself again and again how and when the prophecies were to be accomplished. The shadows of Gethsemane and of Calvary were cast over the fields of Bethlehem and of Nazareth, and they lengthened daily. As Jesus grew up and seemed each hour to become more lovely in all His ways, Mary knew that His steps were moving inexorably towards His prepared destiny—that soon He should be led "even as a sheep to the slaughter."

All whose lot it is to watch one they love slowly dying—whilst there is no hope—may find comfort and strength, if they will think of our Lady waiting for Mount Calvary, weighed down with dread, well-nigh intolerable, yet her soul tranquil and at peace, her eyes fixed on God—taking to her heart the great Beatitude: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

II. THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT

The Second Dolour.

After the ceremonies of the Presentation and Purification, the Holy Family returned to Nazareth.[1] From Nazareth it would seem probable that they went back to Bethlehem and there were visited by the Kings.[1] Soon, however, they had to set out on a much longer—indeed upon a dangerous—journey. One night "an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph, saying: Arise and take the Child and His Mother and be there until I shall tell thee: for it will come to pass that Herod shall seek the Child to destroy Him. Who arose and took the Child and His Mother by night, and retired into Egypt and was there until the death of Herod."[2] The sword of Simeon had not waited long to pierce the soul of Mary. Already her Child was visibly set as a sign of contradiction. In the vain search for the King of kings, the blood of the Holy Innocents was shed by the paltry monarch who shrank from nothing in his hate. Meanwhile, Mary was travelling, wearily walking through the long night, torn with anxieties for her beloved Child.

---

[1] Luke ii. 39.

In the East, even now they will show you some of the places where our Lady is believed to have rested on her way. Not far from Bethlehem there is a cave called the Cave of the Virgin's Milk, now a shrine where the Holy Mass is offered. Here it is said that some of the pure milk with which the Virgin Mother was nourishing her Child fell upon the rocks and whitened them, so that to this day women—Muhammedan as well as Christian—who desire children of Heaven's bounty, come hither to pray. In honour of the Great Mother of God they drink of the white rock dissolved in water; nor do they pray in vain.[1] In the village of Matarieh, not far from Cairo, there is in the garden attached to a House of the Jesuit Fathers, a sycamore tree occupying the place of another under whose grateful shade tradition tells us that our Lady sat, wearied, with her Holy Child. In Old Cairo in a very ancient Coptic Church they treasure the bowl, now used as a font, where, as it has been handed down from father to son through all the centuries, the Mother of Christ washed the adorable Body of her Babe; here, too, they will point out a slit through which Mary and Joseph looked to see, if, perchance, they were being pursued and the pursuers were in sight. During this Flight, a touching legend assures us that a brigand named Dismas—to be known hereafter, throughout the Christian centuries, as the Good Thief—ministered to the Mother and her Child in their sore needs—to be repaid one day ten thousandfold. However much of truth there may be in such traditions, they serve to excite our piety and remind us of that which otherwise we might forget—the severity of the sufferings of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

---

[1] *Cf.* Father Coleridge, S.J., *The Thirty Years*, pp. 171-181.

[2] Matthew ii. 13, 14.

Our Lady's tender heart was racked with constant pain, as she thought of all that had come already, of the voice which was heard in Rama, lamentation and great mourning—Rachel bewailing her children and refusing to be comforted because they are not—of the weariness of Joseph, of the danger to which her Child was even then exposed. Our Lady's loving soul was filled with anxiety—how could it be otherwise?—as she thought of the future, as she saw the careworn face of her spouse, as she asked herself, How were they to live? We know that her confidence in the Providence of God was unshaken, but Mary was human, and it is human to be anxious, however deep the trust in heaven. "Oftentimes," writes Ludolph of Saxony, in his famous Life of Christ, "did the Child Jesus ask His Mother for bread, when she could give him nothing but her tears." Besides, there was always the knowledge alive in our Sorrowful Mother's recollection that her Child was to be rejected and afflicted—she knew never when, or in what manner, this rejection and affliction should assail Him. Thus, during her seven years of weary exile from friends and home which constitute the second of her Dolours, the sword pierced day by day—hour by hour—ever deeper into her heart. All those who, like Mary, are in exile; all those who, like Mary, are filled with sorrow at the sufferings of those dear to them; all those who, like Mary, are filled with bitter fear for that which is to come—perhaps not knowing how bread is to be found by a husband for a dear child—may go with confidence to Mary in her sorrows. In this manner has she also suffered. Our Lady of Sorrows will understand.

---

[1] It was rock from this cave, thus dissolved, that constituted "the Virgin's Milk" which was preserved in so many of our English churches before the Reformation. *Cf.* Bridgett, *Our Lady's Dowry*, pp. 335, 336.

III. THE LOSS OF THE HOLY CHILD

The Third Dolour.

Five years had passed since the Return from Egypt, and Jesus was now twelve years old. Mary and Joseph went up to Jerusalem "for the solemn day of the Passover,"[1] and their Divine Child was with them. When the solemnities had been duly celebrated, all prepared to go home. The various groups went at different hours, by different gates, the men travelling in one caravan, the women in another. During the first day's journey our Lady thought that Jesus was with St. Joseph. St. Joseph thought that He was with His Mother. But at night it was discovered that He was not in the company and nowhere could be found. With sorrowing hearts Mary and Joseph returned to the Holy City, searching for their Son.

One human sorrow our Blessed Lady could not endure—the sorrow that comes directly from the sense of personal sin. But now she was destined to come as near to this deepest of sorrows as was possible for the sinless Virgin. Mary questioned herself again and again as to whether the loss of her Child had been due to any fault of hers. Had she perhaps been careless or negligent, or in any way failed in the Trust that had been committed to her keeping? There was also the ever-present, the racking thought: What had happened to Jesus? He was still young. Voluntarily, He had put away the power to defend Himself with the strength of manhood. As Child and Boy, He was under her care and Joseph's. And now where was He? What evil chance had perchance befallen Him? Tormented, heartbroken with anxiety, Mary and Joseph searched for three long days, until at last they found Him—their son of twelve years old—disputing in the Temple, amongst the doctors of the Law! "And it came to pass that after three days they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions."[1] Mary and Joseph approached their Child, full of wonder, since He had given them no sign that He would thus break off, for the moment, from the state of filial subjection to which He had, until then, submitted Himself. "His Mother said to Him: 'Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.'" Their sorrow had indeed been turned into joy at the sight of the Beloved; yet the reaction from the suffering of the three days' loss was well-nigh intolerable. Denis the Carthusian observes that our Lady did not blame Jesus by her question;

---

[1] Luke ii. 41.

---

[1] Luke ii. 46.

but gave vent to a loving complaint—*amorosa conquestio.* Such complaints, far from displeasing God, are always dear to Him. His servant Job thus complained to God; thus complained Jesus Himself upon the Cross. But it was still the hour of our Lady's Sorrows; still was she to be tried as gold in the furnace.

Our Lord replied to His Blessed Mother: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's Business?" And the hearts of Mary and Joseph were yet heavy, for "they understood not the word that He spoke unto them." Soon, however, the cloud was lifted; for we read immediately in the sacred narrative that which even as we read it sounds almost incredible: "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them." Who was it that was *subject,* and to whom was He subject? Jesus was subject to Mary and Joseph. God subject to His creatures, to the work of His Hands. With these wondrous words the Evangelist closes his account of the Loss and Finding in the Temple, adding only—for the second time insisting on the fact—that "His Mother kept all these words in her heart."[1]

In this Dolour the Holy Virgin so played her part as to become the great example of all her children who are tried by what seems to be the loss of our Lord when God veils His Face, and seems not to answer them, and desolation unspeakable afflicts their spirit. She searched patiently, she waited, she gave utterance to the cry of her wounded heart; when the mysterious answer came, she silently committed all to God, and then, suddenly, the sun broke through the clouds, as in His visible Presence, the Lord who had never really abandoned her, was with her once more. In all mystic afflictions of the soul Mary has earned the right, in virtue of her Dolours, to the title with which the Church invokes her as *Consolatrix Afflictorum*, the Consoler of all the Afflicted, who implore her to help them to bear the cross that (though it endure but for a day) weighs without mitigation upon the shoulders of those who, alas! are strangers to the Passion of Christ and the Sorrows of His Mother.

---

[1] Luke ii. 51; *cf.* ii. 19.

IV. THE MEETING ON THE ROAD TO CALVARY

The Fourth Dolour.

The fourth of Mary's Dolours is also the fourth Station of the Cross.

For the eighteen years that followed the Finding in the Temple, all that we know of the Life of Jesus Christ, our great Example, is summed up in the inspired sentence: "He was subject" to Joseph and Mary. Those wonderful years having passed, there followed the three years of the Public Ministry, during which our Lord went about doing good, healing the sick in soul and body, working divine Miracles, speaking as man never spoke before and shall never speak again, training His chosen Apostles, building up His Church. And at length all things were ready. He had eaten the Pasch for the last time with His disciples and given them Himself to be their spiritual Food. It was now the hour which He called His Own, the hour of His high Mysterious Passion. The hour, ever present to Mary's thoughts in dread apprehension, had struck at last. Judas had betrayed his God; Peter had denied Him; Pilate standing aloof, letting matters take their course, had washed his hands. Our Lady heard of all. She had been told of the mock trial; she knew that her Son, the supreme Judge of the Living and the Dead, had been bandied about from one unjust judge to another, from Caiaphas to Herod, and back again from Herod to Caiaphas. The Sovereign King of angels and of men had been crowned with the cruel crown of thorns; His adorable Body had been scourged by brutal soldiers, and crushed beneath the weight of a cross of wood; His Face, upon which angels long to gaze, had been spat upon in contumely; the Maker of the universe, weary, athirst, despised, rejected, bloodstained, was even now toiling up the Hill of Calvary. Mary, accompanied, as we may believe, by St. John and the Magdalen who were to stand with her beneath the Cross, set out to meet her Son. The modest Virgin who a few days before shrank from those streets of Jerusalem when they rang with the glad Hosannas:

"Hosanna to the Son of David, Hosanna in the highest," shrank not now when the air she breathed was rendered horrible, as she heard the shout: "Away with Him, Away with Him. Crucify Him. Crucify Him. His Blood be upon us and upon our children." Amidst that awful clamour Jesus met Mary—the Mother met her Son. Jesus at that dread hour looked upon our Lady, and Mary gazed upon the Face of her Child. It is impossible for any man to picture to himself what then passed within the heart of the afflicted Mother of God. It has been beautifully said that Mary held herself rapt before the Passion of Christ, as the Saints have held themselves before our altars at the moment when the Host is raised, and made a spiritual Communion with devotion and fervour, such as our Lord has never found since then in the most loving soul that He has nourished with the divine Eucharist.[1] She then, as it were, received a Viaticum, by which she was fortified to pass on, up Calvary's Hill, and take her post beneath the Shadow of the Cross.

V. THE CRUCIFIXION

The Fifth Dolour.

The Arms of Christ had already been stretched upon the wood that was to bear them for three long hours; the nails had been driven into His Hands and Feet. The thud of the hammer that fell upon those nails fell also on Mary's heart. The Cross was slowly raised that all might find salvation; the Body of our Lord was lifted up—a sign indeed to be spoken against—that He who suffered thus, might draw all who would gaze thereon, to receive forgiveness of their sins and render love for love; the Precious Blood was slowly trickling down, drop by drop, from His Brow beneath the Crown of Thorns—from His pierced Hands and wounded Feet it flowed as well, to wash our sins away; mankind was saved—but Mary's heart was broken. There stood beneath the Cross, His Mother, and she saw Him die. Of this Dolour, where the Compassion of our Lady was joined to the Passion of her Son, it is best to use few words. Our earth has never seen the like. I speak not now of the death of the world's Creator, but of the human tragedy of His Mother's sorrow. Never before, since time began, did a mother—listening to His broken words, her eyes fixed upon His Face, watch for three hours her tormented Child slowly dying, to see Him expire upon a Cross of shame. And this mother is the Mother of God. We behold here a Mystery of atrocious suffering, in presence of which I feel it reverent to say but little. It may be that the fewer words we use, the more deeply shall we be permitted to feel for our afflicted Mother in her woe. Certain it is, that our Lady's grief was such, that an extraordinary support from God was needed to preserve her life in being. Strengthened from on high, Mary stood immovable—the Faithful Virgin, faithful to her Son in death, faithful to us for whom He died—faithful to the end. She heard the dear Voice she loved so well, pray for His executioners, promise Paradise to the Thief, give her John the Beloved in His place. She heard Him cry: "I thirst." . . . O agony, she saw them give Him the vinegar and the gall. She watched the dark night descend upon His Human Soul, when He cried aloud, "My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" And then, all was over. He had finished the work given Him to do, His Head was bowed. "Father, into Thy Hands I commend My Spirit." Jesus Christ was dead. And Mary still lived on—for such was the Will of God. One thing only will I say. We must never forget that our Lady was a willing victim. Never was a murmur heard to fall from her lips. There was never a murmur in her heart. Her will was as perfectly at one with the Will of the Divine Victim dying upon the Cross, as it is possible for the will of the creature to be attuned in suffering to the Will of the Creator. She consented as freely, as fully on Calvary to the Passion of Christ, as at Nazareth she had consented to His Incarnation. During the three hours of the first Good Friday, our Lady never wavered. "Be it done unto me according to Thy Word" still expressed all that she would say. Everything was left by her to God. For us men and for our salvation she offered her Son without reserve, and thus was granted to her that which shall be hers for ever, her special place, by itself apart, in the work of man's Redemption.

---

[1] *La Reine des Martyrs ou les Souffrances de la Mère de Dieu*, pp. 138, 139.

Mary did not stand beneath the Cross in mere passivity. A mother cannot be passive whilst her son is dying. As on the day of her Purification, though her heart was breaking, she gave Him without reserve for the sins of men. Thus is she associated inseparably, not only at Bethlehem with Jesus in His Childhood, with Jesus in His Boyhood and in His Manhood at Nazareth, but also with Jesus—with our Saviour—on Calvary in His Passion. There she—the model of perfect prayer—pleaded the Great Sacrifice, which could alone redeem the world and set us free. Mary's heart was pierced—a Refuge for all those who weep, that she might gently guide her children, through sorrow, to her Son. O Virgin most sorrowful, O Virgin most holy, we unite our hearts, our wills, our sufferings, our prayers to thine—that in thy loving-kindness thou mayest offer us to God.

VI. THE TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS

The Sixth Dolour.

The sixth and seventh Dolours are also the two last Stations of the Cross.

Jesus was dead. The lance had pierced His Heart, and His Precious Blood was shed to the last drop. Mary waited at her post beneath the Cross. Slowly the Body of her Son was detached from the wood to which it had been fixed—the Nails removed, as it would seem by the hands of Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus, who once had sought his Lord secretly and by night. His Mother waited, until at last, once again, she received her Burden. Once more she took her Son into her arms. Not now was it as once at Bethlehem. Both then and now He was, by His own Will, helpless, as we all were helpless as children, and shall all be helpless when we lie dead. But at Bethlehem He smiled upon her; now He could smile no longer. When He lay upon the straw as a Child in the Stable, or reposed within His Mother's arms, the light of love was in His eyes as He looked upon her—He who was her Babe; now His Eyes were closed and clotted with the Blood that had fallen from His Thorn-pierced Brow. Then He would gently move His Hands and Feet; now those divine Hands that had been placed in Blessing upon the heads of the little children were stark and stiff—those divine Feet which had journeyed wearily through the Holy Land were still and inanimate. The Soul of Christ had indeed quitted His Body and was now with the Fathers in the Limbo of the Just. But the Body of Christ was still hypostatically united with the Person of the Eternal Word, and Mary adored with all the fervour of her soul. She adored the Body of God made

Man, crucified and dead. Having adored her Lord, her heart went out—for this too was the Will of God—in human love—in the natural love of a Mother —to her Child, as she pressed her lips anew to His Face and watered It with her tears. Writing in this manner seems to me, as I pen the words, an intrusion into the guarded shrine of Mary's riven soul. I ask myself, how do I dare to write thus without reserve, to stand on this most holy ground, as it were to pry into grief so sacred—to gaze so close upon such a scene, to venture near to the Mother of God in her inexpressible sorrow when her Son was dead in her arms? Will she say that He belongs to her alone, and that she has a right to the privacy of her sorrows? We know the answer. Her Son is hers in a sense which none can share, but He is also ours. Even her sorrows are not hers alone. They belong to a sinful world. So I will leave my poor words unerased, for I dare to hope that our Lady herself would have it so. We press thus near—if you will, we seem to pry, we gaze so close—for this too is, we may believe, the Will of God. It is God's Will that we should not shrink, held back by undue sensitiveness, from contemplating closely the Passion of Jesus and the Dolours of Mary. For our souls' welfare—for our salvation—the screen of privacy has been removed, and all has been made public. Here there is no place for reserve. It is not only at her post standing beneath the Cross that the Church encourages us to watch our Lady. We may kneel before the Pietà—the representation of the Dead Christ in His Mother's arms—and there strive to enter somewhat into His Mother's sorrow, who is our mother, too. As we kneel, our own small burdens will fall away, or at least be lightened, when we have laid them by her side.

As she received Jesus her Child into her arms, so will she receive us too, who are also her children, when our hour comes to die. In her arms shall we be safe, as was Jesus. She will care for us, as she cared for Him. Meanwhile let us, with our fathers who have gone before us in the Faith, cherish the memory of her Sorrows, of her Compassion for, and with, the Passion of her Son.

VII. THE BURIAL OF OUR LORD

The Seventh Dolour.

Mary could not keep Jesus in her arms for all time. The hour of His Burial was approaching fast. Reverently His Body was wrapped in fine linen cloths, with spices, "as is the manner of the Jews to bury."[1] It was then placed in a sepulchre in the garden—in the place where He was crucified—in Joseph of Arimathæa's own "new monument, hewn in stone, out of a rock, wherein never yet had any man been laid."[2]

---

[1] Mark xv. 46; John xix. 40.

[2] Matt. xxvii. 60; Mark xv. 46; Luke xxiii. 53; John xix. 41.

Our Lady at length had to look for the last time upon the dead Countenance of her Son. Since that hour how many women have given that long last look upon their beloved. Never has any other mother sorrowed as then did our Blessed Lady when she said farewell to Jesus upon the night of the first Good Friday. Where her Treasure lay, there was Mary's heart—with Jesus in the Tomb. But now it must needs be that "a stone should be rolled up to the door of the sepulchre,"[1] to fasten the entrance tight and shut out all—even His Mother, from her Son. Our Lady, the last look taken, slowly turned away, and in a moment was outside the Tomb. Mary felt herself alone—not alone, for God was by her side, yet alone as she had not been since the Angelic Salutation at Nazareth, when the Holy Ghost had overshadowed her, and her Son had been given her by God, to be for three-and-thirty years the stay of her life, her strength and consolation, the support of her infirmity.

The Body of Jesus was removed from His Mother's sight. The sins of men had separated the Soul from the Body of the Word made Flesh. Standing beneath the Cross, His Holy Mother had felt herself separated from the Soul of her Son, when she saw Him die and knew that He could speak to her no more, until He should rise again. Standing outside the sepulchre, Mary knew herself to be separated from the Body, which she had given to our Lord, until it should be transfigured and glorified by Divine Power. We should not think that her faith—her knowledge—that the Resurrection was approaching, was permitted to banish the Blessed Virgin's grief in this last Dolour. We can hardly doubt that as the Passion of Jesus culminated in the mysterious Desolation when He seemed abandoned even by His Father, so at the close of Mary's Sorrows her soul was plunged in mystic desolation, even as was the case in the third Dolour—the Loss in the Temple, of which this last Dolour is in so many ways the counterpart. Each of these Dolours lasted for three days; each of these Dolours was due not to the action of men, but to our Lord alone, for the essence of both Dolours consisted in His absence; during each Dolour her Son, whilst absent from His Mother, was teaching—in the one case the doctors in the Temple, in the other the spirits in prison. Though in each Dolour Mary knew in her heart that she would find Him soon, still whilst the Dolour lasted, the very iron entered into her soul and all around was darkness. This seems to me to be certain; but, even if it were not so, still our Lady's heart was human like to ours, and we know that in the presence of death, the consolations of religion which tell of meeting beyond the grave, do not remove the sorrow which they can but mitigate. We are enjoined not to mourn as those without hope: we are not forbidden to mourn at all. Our religion is not meant to dry all tears on earth. When life is over our Lord Himself shall wipe away all tears from the eyes of those that love Him; but whilst life lasts, those who truly love Jesus Christ will be content to know that they are safe in His pierced Hands, and that He will not try them beyond their strength.

---

[1] Mark xv. 46.

During the war which for four weary years and longer has broken hearts all over Europe, our Lady in her Sorrows has drawn souls innumerable to her side. During the years that yet remain, when so many lives must be desolate and seemingly abandoned, our Lady in her Sorrows will still be their refuge, until, for them too, the darkness shall be lifted, and all made clear in the Paradise of our God.

When St. John led Mary home from the Tomb where Jesus was buried, they were to remain, without the visible Presence of their Lord, until Easter morn should break. Even to the faith of Mary, it seemed far off. But the night passed and the day broke at last—the glad day of the Resurrection. So shall it be with all who trust their lives to the sorrowful Mother of God. She has suffered all that can be suffered by a creature here below. How much deeper has she not drunk than any other of the Chalice of her Lord? Therefore she understands, and, mindful of her Sorrows, we trust ourselves to her—lovingly and to the full.

Who amongst the children of men would dare to compare his sufferings with the Passion of Jesus or with the Dolours of Mary? All who will strive, in union with their Desolate Mother, to bear bravely whatever cross our Lord may see well to place upon their shoulders, will find that when that cross is beginning to seem too heavy to be borne, He will Himself deign to raise it for awhile, until at last He shall lift it for ever. Then shall all things be made new. Then shall the crown, which is the reward of the cross borne patiently, be placed upon the brow of him who has endured unto the end. Then shall the wonderful words be spoken: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." For this—Mary will whisper to her children—for this it is indeed worth while to wait patiently until the night of waiting be past and the day break in the open Vision of our God.

Ad vesperam demorabitur fletus;
ad matutinum lætitia.

CHAPTER VII

MARY'S JOYS

Si corde multis ingemis
O Mater alma luctibus,
tibi refusa cœlitus
mulcent dolorem gaudia.

Ex Officio Gaud. B.V.M. Fratribus Minoribus concesso.

Experience proves that the deepest happiness is often conjoined to the most acute suffering. This is no mere paradox. We see its truth in the case of human love, provided it be pure and consequently unselfish. A husband makes a sacrifice for his wife, a wife for her husband, a mother for her child, a friend for his friend—and the greater the sacrifice the deeper the contentment that settles upon the soul. Love, which is worthy of the name of love, spells sacrifice, and in sacrifice there is hidden joy. If this be true of the love of man for man, far more is it true of the love of man for God. No happiness that can come to the dwellers upon this earth may equal the happiness of one who has learned generously to unite his sufferings with the sufferings of Christ. His conscience is at rest, and he possesses the peace that passeth understanding.

We are taught by St. Catharine of Genoa that no happiness upon earth can be compared with the happiness of the Souls in Purgatory, whose happiness consists essentially in perfect conformity and abandonment to the Will of God in the midst of suffering. It will not be thus in Heaven, for in Heaven suffering has done its work and has passed away for ever, but it must be so in Purgatory, where suffering enters necessarily into the purification of the soul; it must be thus also upon earth, where the disciples of Christ are called upon to take up their Cross and follow, according to the measure of grace which is given to each, in the footsteps of their crucified Master. This mysterious union of joy and sorrow finds its highest expression in our Lord Himself, whose human Soul, even in the hour of its uttermost dereliction, enjoyed the bliss of the Beatific Vision. And as, after the sorrows of Christ there have never been sorrows that can be compared to the sorrows of His Blessed Mother, so after the joy and jubilation in the Heart of Christ, there has never been joy like the joy in the heart of Mary. Our Lady's whole life was a life of sorrow; it was also a life of unceasing jubilee. But, as her Seven Sorrows rose and fell like mountainous billows upon the deep ocean of her abiding grief—"Like as the sea is thy desolation O Virgin daughter of Sion"—so we may enumerate certain Joys that gladdened with extraordinary exultation the soul of the Mother of God.

Old English Devotion to our Lady's Joys.

Our fathers in England, before the change of religion, had a marked devotion to Mary's Joys, of which they counted Five, bearing in their thoughts the Five Wounds of Jesus.[1] To exemplify this, Father Bridgett in his book "Our Lady's Dowry" gives us the following extracts from two English wills.

John Baret of Bury devises as follows: "I wille have at myn interment at my diryge and messe V men clade in blak in wurshippe of J'hus V woundys, and V women clad in whitte in wurshippe of our Ladye's fyve joyes, eche of them holdying a torche of clene vexe"—and John Gosselyn: "I wyl and bequethe to the fynding of V lights to brenne in the honour of the V wounds of our Lord God and the V joies of our Lady St. Mary."[2]

The following hymn taken from a Prymer of 1538 will tell us which were the joys of our Lady chosen by our English ancestors for devout commemoration:

"Rejoice, O Virgin, Christ's Mother dear,
Which hast conceived, by hearing with ear
Of Gabriel's Salutation.

---

[1] Perhaps also with reference to the five sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary.

[2] *Wills of Bury St. Edmunds,* p. 17 (Camd. Soc.), and Blomefield's *Norfolk,* v., p. 446.

Rejoice, because to God thou art lefe
And barest Him without pain or grief,
  In chaste conversation.
Rejoice, because thy most dear Son,
Whom thou didst see through the Heart run,
  Rose with manifestation.
Rejoice because He ascended plain
Before thy Face into Heaven again,
  By His proper excitation.
Rejoice because thou followest Him,
And great honours to thee is given
  In the heavenly habitation:
Where the Fruit of thy womb everlasting
We may behold, through thy deserving,
  In joy without mutation."[1]

Devotion to the joys of our Lady, often called by the English the Blissful Maiden, was the favourite devotion of St. Thomas of Canterbury, himself known to our forefathers as the Blissful Martyr. There is a Latin hymn on our Lady's joys, commonly attributed to St. Thomas, in which we find Seven Joys commemorated. These comprise the Annunciation, the Birth of our Lord, the worship of the Wise Men, the Finding in the Temple, the Resurrection, the Ascension, and the Assumption.

It will be noticed that the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple does not figure in this list; yet it must have given great joy to the heart of our Lady. On this subject Peter of Blois writes as follows:

> "Enter the Temple, O Blessed Virgin, offer the Blessed Fruit of thy womb. A day will come

---

[1] *Cf. Our Lady's Dowry* pp. 65-68.

> when He will not be offered in the Temple, nor in Jerusalem, but outside the City—not in the arms of Simeon, but on those of the Cross. A day will come when He will not be redeemed by birds as He is to-day, but will redeem us in His Blood, since God has sent Him to be the Redemption of His people. That will be the evening, as this is the morning, sacrifice. Rejoice, O Mother, in the morning sacrifice, for in the evening sacrifice thou wilt grieve and the sword shall pierce thy soul. Rejoice, O Mother, and exult, O daughter of Sion. Rejoice and sing the song of thy virginity. Or, rather, listen, O Virgin, for Anna and Simeon are singing with thee. Holy Simeon sings the canticle of justice, and Anna that of continence. Sing thou, also, the canticle of chastity, the new and until now unheard canticle of virginity together with fruitfulness, of humility with glory and beatitude. 'Behold,' she says, 'from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed.'"[1]

From another point of view—that of Simeon's Prophecy—the Presentation in the Temple was the scene whence sprang the first of our Lady's Dolours; nor was it possible to make any such sharp division between Mary's sorrow and her joy in this Mystery, as it was easy to make between the sorrow at the Loss, and the joy in the Finding, of the Holy Child in the Temple. We need not therefore be surprised that the fourth joyful Mystery of the Rosary was never included in any authorised list of our Lady's unmixed Joys.

---

[1] *Petr. Blos. Serm.* 11 and 12.

Franciscan Rosary of Mary's Joys.

As the Order of the Servants of Mary—generally known as Servites—have from the date of their foundation deemed it their special privilege to spread devotion to the Sorrows of their Queen, so devotion to Mary's Joys has found a congenial home in the world-wide Franciscan family. St. Bernardine of Siena, the great Franciscan preacher, speaks of it as in his day already an ancient and praiseworthy custom amongst his brethren thus to honour Mary. As the black habit of the Servites speaks to the world of the Dolours, so the Rosary with its seven Mysteries hanging at the girdle of the Franciscans speaks of the Joys of our Lady. This Franciscan Rosary includes six of the Joys mentioned in the hymn of St. Thomas—substituting, however, Mary's joy at the Visitation for her joy at the Ascension. It is especially by means of this Rosary that for many centuries the devotion to our Lady's Joys has been spread amongst the Faithful, so that when now we speak of the Seven Joys of Mary, ordinarily we intend to designate our Lady's joy at the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Birth of our Lord, the Adoration by the Magi, the Finding in the Temple, the Resurrection and the Assumption. I will venture to write a few sentences—alas! how inadequate they must be—on each of these mysterious sources of our Lady's gladness.

The Seven Joys of our Lady.

I. THE ANNUNCIATION

Our Lady's First Joy.

We know that the period when Christ was born was amongst the Jews a period of the most lively expectation. The weeks of Daniel had passed, and there was an eager waiting for the coming of the Messias. Amongst other maidens of her race Mary was looking forward and praying to God:

> "Rorate cœli desuper et nubes pluant Justum,
> Aperiatur terra et germinet Salvatorem."[1]

A pious tradition tells us that Mary was beseeching the Lord that it might be granted to her to be one day the handmaiden of the Saviour's Mother, when lo! the Angel of the Incarnation was in her presence, revealing the Divine purposes to the lowly Maid of Nazareth. The Angelic Salutation was heard for the first time on earth. The Immaculate Virgin was declared to be full of grace, and assured that she need not fear—her virginity should be preserved—for the Holy Ghost should overshadow her and the Holy One to be born of her should be the fruit of her womb. She was the Blessed amongst all women. As Mary bowed her head in submission to the Will of her Creator, her soul was flooded with joy unknown on earth until that moment—joy not only because the hour of Redemption had come, and the Lord God should visit His people—but also because of the grace with which at that supreme hour she was endowed. Great graces always bring great joy—what joy must then have been Mary's at the moment when she was raised from her lowliness to be the Queen of Angels and of men, when she was made the Mother of the Lord of all! Our Lady's joy arose, not from the mere fact of her exaltation in itself, but from the fact that her exaltation was the necessary means to bring her so close to God. Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Spirit, she rejoiced and exulted at being thus ineffably near to God. Innocence of heart, purity of soul, simplicity of mind must needs bring happiness in their train. The Most Holy Virgin, innocent, pure, simple in God's sight, had the happiness, possessed by no other creature—the happiness of absolute sinlessness—and now, as the message from Heaven was presented by Gabriel, there was added, even on earth, the happiness without measure which came from the wonderful knowledge that to her keeping had been entrusted the Saviour of the world—the Mighty God Himself, made one with her in the Human Nature which was henceforward to be His for evermore. When Gabriel left her presence, surely Mary's soul was filled with joy beyond the joy of any other woman. She was already a mother—already she was the Mother of God.

---

[1] "Rain down dew, ye Heavens. Let the clouds pour forth the Just. Let the earth be opened and give birth to the Saviour."

II. THE VISITATION

The Mother of God, having heard from the Angel that her cousin St. Elisabeth was in her old age about to bear a child, left Nazareth and went on what, for a young maiden, must have been a difficult journey of at least five days' duration, passing through part of Galilee and the hostile Samaria until she reached the mountains of Judæa where Zachary dwelt with his wife.

Our Lady's Second Joy.

"And Mary, rising up in those days, went into the hill-country with haste into a city of Juda, and she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elisabeth.

"And it came to pass that when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb."[1]

On these words Origen comments as follows:

> "Superiors go to those less highly placed that by their presence they may confer upon them some advantage. Thus both the Saviour went to John that He might sanctify his Baptism, and Mary, immediately when she heard the Angel announcing that she had conceived the Saviour, and that her kinswoman Elisabeth was with child, rising with haste went into the hill-country and entered the house of Elisabeth. But Jesus, whom she bore within her, hastened to sanctify John who lay as yet in his

---

[1] Luke i. 39, 41.

> mother's womb. The infant did not exult in the womb before Mary came and saluted Elisabeth, but the moment when Mary spoke the word, which the Son of God, in His Mother's womb, had suggested to her, the infant exulted with joy, and then it was that Jesus first made His Forerunner a Prophet."[1]

Surely a most wonderful mystery! The Divine Babe and His Mother visit Zachary and Elisabeth. Their unborn child leaps exultingly when Mary speaks, for Mary's voice is the voice of the Mother of God. Thus exulting, the Baptist becomes a Prophet, declaring and foretelling the joy that was to be given to the world through the coming of the Saviour. At that moment, according to the teaching of all Antiquity, he was himself sanctified before his birth by that Saviour Himself within the Virgin's Womb.

"Then was accomplished what the Angel had foretold: 'He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb.'"[2]

"And Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she cried out with a loud voice, and said: Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy womb. And whence is this unto me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold so soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the infant in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord."[1]

---

[1] *Homil. VII. in Lucam*, 2.

[2] Luke i. 15.

Surely our Lady's joy was great when she heard these joyful things. Great was her joy when she listened to her cousin filled with the Holy Ghost, crying out with a loud voice, that should be heard throughout all ages, proclaiming her twofold blessedness, her blessedness in believing, and her blessedness in her Motherhood—declaring also the blessedness of the Fruit of her womb, Jesus. Jesus, as Mary knew full well, was blessed in Himself—God Blessed forever—she was blessed only through His grace and in virtue of her relation to Him. Yet her blessedness was such that all generations should, together with Elisabeth, call her the Blessed One—blessed beyond compare, not only blessed amongst women, but blessed above all women, blessed with a supereminent blessing above all creatures whether in Heaven or on the earth. Great, then, was Mary's wondrous joy when she heard the words of Elisabeth: "Whence is this unto me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?"—for in these words her Child was declared the Lord of whom the Psalmist had said: "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit down upon my right Hand"—David's Lord, and Elisabeth's, and her own—and yet He was her Son. Great was her joy as she heard that the unborn Baptist had leapt exultingly when she spoke, for this miracle proved that already the Saviour, who was the Fruit of her womb, was bestowing the largesse of His grace upon the children of men. Great indeed was Mary's joy at this high mystery of her Visitation to the house of Elisabeth—so great that one would have said it was beyond the power of words to express, had not our Lady herself spoken and declared her joy: "And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His Handmaiden, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and Holy is His Name."

---

[1] Luke i. 41-45.

III. THE NATIVITY

The Third Joy.

We read that Mary abode with her cousin St. Elisabeth for three months and then returned to her own house.[1] But soon "it came to pass that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. And all went to be enrolled, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth into Judæa to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife."[2] Bethlehem was full. Mary and Joseph were poor. "There was no room for them in the inn." At length they found a cave, sometimes used as a common stable. There it is that at this day you may read, in the sacred place now a chapel—where morning by morning the Holy Mass is offered—the simple words: "*Hic natus est Jesus Christus.*" Yes, here was born Jesus Christ our Lord. Here Mary the Virgin Most Pure saw Jesus of a sudden lying before her—her Babe—her Babe who was her God—the Word made Flesh. He "whose generation was from Eternity" appeared in the Manger. He came to this earth, in no way harming or paining His Mother, even as a sunbeam may suddenly break forth from a cloud and pierce a prism of purest crystal without doing it any injury or violence.

---

[1] Luke i. 56.

[2] Luke ii. 1-5.

> "A Virgin brought forth Christ," writes St. Augustine, "a Virgin she remained. Even then the Lord, before He rose again, was born through closed doors."[1]

As in the time that was to come after His Resurrection, our Lord would manifest Himself to His Apostles though the doors were shut, so now did He manifest Himself to Mary, passing through "the garden enclosed, the sealed fountain,"[2] "the closed gate of her chaste womb, which was shut and no man opened it, for the Lord passed through it."[3] Her spotless Virginity remained unscathed.[4] Thus was fulfilled that which the Lord had spoken by the Prophet saying: "Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and bring forth a Son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."[1]

---

[1] *Serm.* ccxlvii. 2.

[2] Cant. Cant. iv. 12.

[3] Ezechiel xliv. 2.

[4] *Cf. Catech. Conc. Trident.*, Pars. I., Art. iii. 13.

To these divine Mysteries we may apply the noble words which Origen used after narrating the wonders of the Visitation:

> "Would that it might happen to me that I should be called a fool by the unbelieving, in that I have believed such things as these. The event and the truth have shown that I have not given credit to folly, but to Wisdom. May that which the unbelieving reckon as folly become for me the occasion of salvation. For unless the Birth of the Saviour had been heavenly and blessed, unless it had possessed something divine and surpassing the common things of humanity, never would His doctrine have penetrated throughout all the world. . . . I beseech you then, O Catechumens, not to draw back. Let no man make you tremble and affright you, but follow Jesus, who goes before you. He is drawing you to salvation, He is leading you to the Church that now is upon the earth. If you bring forth worthy fruits of good works, He will bring you to the Church of the Firstborn whose names have been written in heavenly places. Blessed is she that believed, because those things shall have been accomplished which were spoken to her by the Lord — things concerning which the Blessed Mary magnifies the Lord Jesus."[2]

---

[1] Isaiah vii. 14; Matt. i. 23.

[2] *Homil. VII. in Lucam.*

If our Lady magnified the Lord when those things which had been spoken to her had not yet been actually accomplished, how much more did she praise His Name when she saw them before her eyes! Of a truth the Holy Ghost had overshadowed her when Gabriel brought her the message from on High, and now the Holy One who had been born in Bethlehem was hers to love and cherish, the Blessed Fruit of her womb, over whom she had a mother's rights, to whom she owed a mother's duties.

> "As Mary looked at the Divine Infant," writes Basil of Seleucia, "thus, methinks, swayed by fears and longings, she discussed alone within herself: What fitting Name, O Child, shall I find for Thee? Shall I call Thee Man? But Thy Conception is Divine. Shall I call Thee God? But Thou hast taken Human Flesh. What then am I to do with Thee? Shall I nourish Thee with milk, or shall I only meditate on Thee as God? Shall I tend Thee as Mother, or adore Thee as handmaiden? Shall I embrace Thee as Son, or pray to Thee as God? Shall I give Thee milk, or offer Thee incense? How great is this ineffable and most mighty marvel! Heaven is Thy Throne, yet my bosom bears Thee."[1]

O! the joy that welled forth from Mary's heart—the joy unspeakable, whether she adored her God upon her knees, or clasped her Child to her breast and loaded Him with the kisses of her mouth.[2] O! the joy as she contemplated the Incarnation and knew, that at length, the Lord had indeed visited His people—the new joy that entered into her love for the Father who had given His Son for the salvation of the world, who had committed His Son to her keeping—the joy that sprang from the Love that God had given her—the human mother's love—as she ministered gently and most fondly to her little Son, as "she wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes and laid Him in the manger,"[1] as she gave Him of her milk to be His nourishment, as proudly she showed Him to Joseph her spouse and trusted Him awhile to Joseph's arms. Never before or since has there been joy on earth like to the Virgin Mother's joy in Bethlehem that first Christmas night, whilst the Angels sang rejoicing over Mary and her Child.

---

[1] *De Annuntiat. Deiparæ*, Orat. x.

[2] *Cf. Cant. of Cant. I.* i.

IV. THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS

The Fourth Joy.

"*And there were in the same country shepherds watching and keeping the night-watches over their flocks. And behold an Angel of the Lord stood by them and the Brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the Angel said to them : Fear not, for, behold, I bring you tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour in the City of David, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto*

---

[1] Luke ii. 7.

you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will. And it came to pass, after the Angels had departed from them into Heaven, the shepherds said to one another: Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word which is come to pass, which the Lord hath shown to us. And they came with haste and they found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in the manger."[1]

Thus amongst men, the first to find Jesus, Mary and Joseph were those simple shepherds. They were Jews and they were poor. To the Jews first was the Messias sent, and to the poor first in every age was the Gospel to be preached. Our Lady's heart was full of joy and welcome for these faithful men who thus early found the Saviour who is Christ the Lord. But when the shepherds left the cave, they left no gifts behind them. They represented themselves alone. Others were soon to come from far off, mysteriously attracted, rich and learned, the firstfruits of the Church of the Gentiles that was to be, offering mystic gifts to Mary's Son.

"*When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came Wise Men from the East to Jerusalem, saying: Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His Star in*

---

[1] Luke ii. 8-16.

the East and are come to adore Him . . . and behold the Star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the Star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and falling down they adored Him; and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh."[1]

Tradition has preserved the names of these Wise Men. They are venerated in the Church as Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. How musical the names sound to us, as we say them aloud over and over again changing the order as we please. Balthazar, Caspar, and Melchior. The beautiful words sound like music in our hearts, for they belong to our fathers in the Faith, who found of old, as, by God's Mercy, we too, in these later days have found, Jesus with Mary His Mother. They adored Him and offered Him their gifts. Of the Feast of the Epiphany we can never tire, and even when the hair is white on our heads, it is a delight which seems yearly to grow greater, when Epiphany comes round, to kneel with the children by the Crib and admire the rich Kings with their regal train. What music then must it have made in the heart of Mary when she watched it, not in representation, but in reality, as it happened before her eyes. What joy in her soul as she watched the Pageant of their coming. Whilst yet they lingered, there was rendered to her Son, if only for a moment, that which was His by every right and title. He came unto His own, and His own people received Him not—save only the shepherds, and afterwards, a few poor fishermen and the like. But these Wise Men, who were Gentiles, not only were willing to receive Him—they came from afar to find Him. The Wise Men found Him who is the Eternal Wisdom and they did not fail to recognise Him even in His self-abasement. They gave Him the adoration that is His due.

---

[1] Matt. ii. 1-11.

Mary herself is the *Sedes Sapientiæ*, Wisdom's Seat, and they found Him on His chosen Throne—in His Mother's arms. She had found no cradle of gold in which to lay her Babe. She, who is Heaven's Queen, had been forced to lay her Child in the Manger, upon the straw. And now they were offering Him gold. Was it not seemly? He is the King of Kings, of David's Royal Line. They were offering Him incense. Was it not just? He is the Lord her God. They were offering Him myrrh. Was it not touching? He has taken our human nature and needs all the care and comfort His Mother can bestow upon Him. There was also mystical forethought for His Burial.

When the Wise Men reverently said their farewell to our Lady and went back into their own country—when the pomp and the glory of their coming was slowly passing away—Mary's heart felt very soft and tender—perhaps she was very near to tears—but assuredly she was full of joy.

V. THE FINDING IN THE TEMPLE

Our Lady's Fifth Joy.

After the agony of the Three Days' Loss the Blessed Mother of God found her Child teaching amongst the doctors in the Temple. If great had been the sorrow of the Losing, great beyond doubt was the joy of the Finding. Her anxieties were laid at rest. Jesus was safe, and she had not been in any way to blame, for He had been about His Father's Business. Moreover, she saw Him teaching, instructing those learned in the Law, making all who heard Him marvel at His Wisdom and His answers. We know how amongst Orientals, especially amongst the Jews, no credit is given to youth, whilst the greatest respect is paid to age. In the East it is asked: How can the young know? What experience can they have had? How can they yet have acquired the ripe wisdom that only comes after the passage of much time? We find St. Paul exhorting Timothy to "let no man despise thy youth,"[1] when Timothy was at least forty years of age! Yet these doctors, men, all of mature age, were hanging on the words of this Boy of twelve! Mary's soul was full of joy, as she "kept all His words in her heart." Full of joy was her soul, as she learned that He was to be with her once again, as Jesus went down to Nazareth with Mary and with Joseph, and was "subject to them."[1]

---

[1] 1 Tim. iv. 12.

VI. THE RESURRECTION

Regina cœli lætare, alleluia.
quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia.
resurrexit sicut dixit, alleluia.

Our Lady's Sixth Joy.

The measure of our Lady's joy at the Resurrection is the measure of her sorrow during the Passion of her Divine Son. Never for one instant was there a flicker in the light that shone in Mary's soul after the Death of Christ. She *knew* by faith that Christ would rise again, according to His Word, on the third day. Yet faith, however strong, must essentially differ from sight. At the Resurrection faith passed into sight. Mary saw her Son alive in His glorified Humanity. What unutterable consolation must that sight have caused our Blessed Mother. Once more she gazed upon the Face of her Son. No longer white and bloodless—but now glorious and resplendent. Once again kindness and gentleness shone from His opened Eyes, once again His dear Hands were moved, once again He spoke and Mary heard His beloved Voice—Death no longer had dominion over His Human Nature. Suffering, pain and sorrow could no more come nigh Him. Anticipation for any evil to her

---

[1] Luke ii. 51.

Son could not again wound the heart of the Mother of God. The sword foretold by Simeon, that so long had affrighted her when she thought of what it boded for her Jesus—the sword which had actually pierced her soul as she stood beneath the Cross on Calvary—was gently drawn forth by the Hand of God Himself, as she watched her Child and Lord in His risen Beauty. The prophecy had been fulfilled and belonged to the past. Her sorrows too were past, for they sprang from the sufferings of her Son, and her Son was victorious and triumphant. During the great forty days that supervened upon the Resurrection Mary's soul was full of joy and thankfulness.

It has been thought by some that our Lord, who had not yet ascended to His Father, during these days, lived once more, as of old, with His Immaculate Mother, and from her house appeared to the Magdalen, to Peter and the other Disciples.[1] However this may be, it is certain that our Lady knew all that was said and done whilst her Son "showed Himself alive after His Passion to His Apostles, for forty days appearing to them and speaking of the Kingdom of God."[2] She knew that the mighty commission had been given to the Church, by the authority of Christ Himself, to forgive the sins of men; she knew that the sheep and lambs for whom her Son had shed His Precious Blood had been committed by Him to Blessed Peter's pastoral care; she knew that Thomas had heard the words that should be the comfort of countless generations of believing Christians: "Because thou hast seen, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and have believed"; she knew the words of the Divine Promise: "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Mary knew all that passed, and all was as balsam to the heart that once had been pierced and was now healed and renewed unto joy. The great forty days would soon be over, and His Mother must once more lose sight of the Human Features of her Son, but it was only for a little while, and she rejoiced because now He was going to His Father. Her soul was glad, because He was now to enter into the joy that He had with His Father before the world was made; her soul was glad because He should enter into the Holy of Holies, as our High Priest, to make intercession for her children; her soul was glad because soon He should ascend on high, leading captivity captive, to obtain gifts for men; her soul was glad because He was going to His Father's House, where there are many mansions, to prepare a place for all that love Him—above all to prepare a resting-place for His Mother—once so weary—where she should reign for ever.

---

[1] See *Dublin Review* for April, 1867, pp. 443-445.

[2] Acts i. 3.

VII. THE ASSUMPTION

Our Lady's Seventh Joy.

Thus far we have been contemplating our Lady's joys on earth. We read that the Holy Mother of God deigned to reveal to her servant St. Thomas of Canterbury Seven of her Joys in Heaven. Such high mysteries are beyond our ken. We know indeed that to Mary above all creatures it was said: "*Veni amica Mea, veni pulchra Mea, veni ex Libano et coronaberis*" ("Come My beloved, come thou that art all fair, come from Libanus and thou shalt be crowned"). We know that she was welcomed, bands of angels waiting upon her as she passed on her way from earth to Paradise, by the Father who had chosen her, and by the Son who had dwelt within her, and by the Spirit who had sanctified her immaculate soul. We know that she sees God face to face and rejoices with a bliss beyond compare. More than this, we, who are not Saints like the Blessed Thomas, and to whom no heavenly secrets have been entrusted by our Queen, can hardly know. It has been written that "eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what good things God has prepared for those that love Him"—that is we humbly trust, even for us. If then it be impossible for us to conceive the joys that are waiting even for us—

if still more it be impossible for us to conceive the joys that are waiting for the Saints, for the Magdalen, for Peter and Paul, for the Beloved Disciple—how can it be possible for us to conceive the nature of Mary's joys in Heaven? We know only that hers are the joys which are the fitting recompense bestowed by the loving God for the Sorrows she suffered without complaint, when yet she lived upon the earth. We know that our Lord is never outdone in generosity. His Mother did not give Him of that which cost her nothing. She gave Him her all. And now she rejoices with an exceeding great joy—every tear she shed, remembered by Him who counts even the cup of cold water given for His Name's sake—remembered and transfigured into a glistening jewel upon her brow, in the Land where she is crowned in her glad glory, as the Queen of Angels and of men—the Mother of the King who dwells in the Brightness that is inaccessible.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SINLESSNESS OF MARY

Arca Sanctificationis Domini.
PSALM cxxxi. 8.

Human Weakness.

THE grace of God proffered to every man is abundantly sufficient to enable him to resist and overcome successively each temptation, regarded singly, that may assail him during the course of his life. So great, however, is human weakness, even though repaired by Christ, that, apart from a special privilege of God, it is morally impossible for any man always to correspond in such a wholehearted manner with divine grace, as to avoid all venial sins and deliberate imperfections, when the various temptations that assail us through life are looked at collectively. Here or there, even in the holiest soul, on one or another occasion, a lapse will take place. So that, with reason, should all men ask pardon for their offences in the sight of God. Not only the thief, expiating a life of crime blefuy a sham death, but also John the beloved disciple standing faithful beneath his Master's Cross, must humble themselves as sinners before the Lord —all men, that is, save only Mary. For the Catholic Church teaches that such an extraordinary privilege was bestowed upon the Most Holy Mother of God, as to preserve her spotless from the slightest taint, not merely of original, but also of actual sin.

The following is the definition of the Council of Trent:

> "Should anyone assert that it is possible after Justification to avoid, throughout the whole of life, all sins even those which are venial—apart from a special Privilege of God such as the Church holds concerning the Blessed Virgin (*quemadmodum de Beata Virgine tenet Ecclesia*) let him be anathema."

This is, undoubtedly, the teaching of Antiquity, both East and West, taken as a whole. In the West there was no wavering whatsoever. I have already called the attention of my readers to the well-known words of the great Augustine, who, when confronted with Pelagian denials of the need of grace and undue exaltation of the powers of human nature, taught that:

St. Augustine and the Sinlessness of our Lady.

"All men, even the most holy, have sinned save the Holy Virgin Mary, touching whom, for the honour of our Lord, I wish, when we are treating of sins, no question to be raised at all."[1]

---

[1] *De Nat. et Gratia. con. Pelag.*, xlii. For full quotation *cf.* p. 43.

We may, however, notice that, whereas the Church has defined that the Privilege of the Immaculate Conception belongs uniquely to the Blessed Virgin—with regard to actual sin, we are taught merely that no man can avoid all sins through life without a special privilege such as that which was bestowed upon the Blessed Virgin. There is therefore nothing *in the Church's authoritative teaching*, notwithstanding the absolute words of St. Augustine, forbidding us to believe that this special privilege may have been extended to St. Joseph, who was drawn so closely within the intimacies of the Incarnation, and belongs to its hierarchy as the foster-father of Jesus and the husband of Mary. That this was actually the case is the opinion of St. Francis of Sales.

And St. Bernard.

St. Bernard summed up the unanimous teaching of all his Latin predecessors when he wrote:

> "I hold that a specially copious blessing of sanctification descended upon Mary, not only to sanctify her beginnings, but also henceforward to guard her life, preserving it free from all sin—a thing which we believe to have been conferred on none other born of woman . . . for it was fitting that the Queen of Virgins should have been enriched with the privilege of singular sanctity, and that she should live a life without any sin, inasmuch as, by giving birth to Him who destroyed sin and death, she was to obtain the gift of life and holiness for all."[1]

[1] Epist. clxxiv.

In the East, however, ordinarily so devout to Mary and so enthusiastic in her praise, we find surprising exceptions to the general teaching. Here we are confronted with what is no doubt a considerable difficulty. St. John Chrysostom thought that our Lady, whilst "anxious to confer a favour upon the company," was also guilty of some womanly desire to receive the credit that would come to the Mother of Christ, should He work the miracle that she asked of Him at Cana, and that for this reason, our Lord, before working the miracle, "thus to honour His Mother,"[1] for her greater sanctification "doing her the greatest profit," rebuked her, in order to raise her "from lower sentiments to higher thoughts."

Strange opinion of St. John Chrysostom.

Again, Origen was of opinion that in consequence of the words of Christ (paying no heed to the fact that they were addressed not to Mary, but to the Apostles), "This night you shall all be scandalised in Me," it followed that even the Holy Virgin doubted for a moment on Mount Calvary, and therefore he interpreted the Sword of Simeon that should pierce her soul by such a doubt. In this strange aberration he was followed by great Eastern authorities—by St. Basil of Cæsarea and even by St. Cyril of Alexandria.

And of Origen and others.

In considering such views as these, we must remember that no Father of the Church possessed, or even dreamed of claiming, the gift of inerrancy. Apart from any private authority that he may possess in consequence of his exceptional learning, he is but a witness to the tradition of his local Church. When the Fathers agree in their teaching, for example, in the interpretation of any passage in Holy Scripture, their agreement represents the agreement of the various local churches and, thus representing the unanimity of tradition, carries authority which it is not lawful for Catholics to contradict. This is what is meant by "the unanimous consent of the Fathers." But, when a Father, however great his authority on other matters, holds an opinion which is opposed to the common teaching, it is either a personal eccentricity, or represents merely a local tradition in no way Apostolic, into the origin of which it is often very interesting to enquire. When a Father teaches an opinion that has subsequently been condemned by the Church, needless to say that Catholics know the opinion to be false, and are sure that the Father who taught it would have been the first, had he been alive, to welcome the judgment of authority and bow to its decision.

---

[1] *In Joan. Hom.*, xxi.. xxii.

No Father of the Church endowed with Privilege of Infallibility.

Consent of the Fathers.

It is a striking truth that neither sanctity nor learning suffices to confer immunity from error in matters not yet authoritatively decided by the Church. The exercise of Infallibility has been conferred upon no private individual. It is due, not to qualities such as sanctity and learning, which are human, but to the assistance of the Holy Ghost granted to the successors of him upon whom the Church was built—an assistance which is divine, and independent of any human qualities whatsoever.

Infallibility of the Church alone.

Cardinal Newman has pointed out that the absence at Antioch and Cæsarea of any explicit tradition as to the sinlessness of our Lady, is due to the infiltrations of Arianism, and that, throughout the East, the constant and unavoidable contact of Catholics in the fourth century with semi-Arians and their critical schools, sufficed to obscure the primitive view of the absolute incompatibility of any sin, however small, with the office of the Motherhood of God.[1] Such considerations as these tend to modify the surprise we feel, when we learn for the first time that St. Basil and St. John Chrysostom—such great and venerable names—in this matter, stand outside the main current of Catholic Tradition and have written words that are so repugnant to our sense of what is becoming and our knowledge of what is true.

---

[1] *A Letter to Rev. E. B. Pusey*, p. 144: "It is not surely wonderful, if, in Syria and Asia Minor, the seat in the fourth century of Arianism and semi-Arianism, the prerogatives of the Mother were obscured together with the essential glory of the Son, or if they who denied the tradition of His Divinity, forgot the tradition of her sinlessness," etc.

We should remember that there is hardly a Father of the Church whose works have not had to be corrected in some matter concerning which further light has been shed by decisions of the Church, subsequently to his day. St. John Chrysostom himself—the glory of the East, and surely one of the greatest of the Fathers—wrote on grace and free will sentences that he could never have written after the condemnation of Pelagius. If Fathers of high renown, writing before the Council of Trent, ascribed some faults to our Lady, other Fathers equally great used language concerning the Consubstantiality of the Son which after Nicæa would have been formally heretical. In neither case was there any conscious denial either of the Godhead of our Lord or of the incomparable sanctity of His Mother.

It has also been pointed out by Cardinal Newman that these painful suggestions that our Lady was in some way or other at fault, were directed not against the Mother of God personally, but rather reflected upon her merely regarded as a woman, and thus sharing in the weaknesses which at the time were generally attributed to the feminine sex.[1] It is very doubtful, for example, whether St. John Chrysostom, who wrote: "A virgin cast us forth from Paradise;

---

[1] *A Letter to Pusey*, p. 136.

through a Virgin we have found Life Eternal,"[1] and again: "Truly admirable was the Virgin, and Luke shows forth her virtue,"[2] would have regarded a mother's natural desire to receive credit from the fame of her son as a fault at all. Certainly he would not have regarded it as a *sin*—in the sense of a breach of a commandment of God. Certainly he did regard it as a mother's "weakness." Similarly, I imagine that Origen and the Eastern Fathers who followed his erroneous opinion,[3] would have looked upon a being whose faith was in no way shaken by the terrible happenings on Calvary, as hardly a woman at all, but rather as belonging to another sphere. With them, as with us, our Lady stood for all that is essentially perfect in womanhood—only their conception differs from ours as to what precisely is perfection in womanhood, or rather as to the sublime heights to which perfection in womanhood is capable of rising.

I in no way submit these considerations as disposing of the whole of the difficulty. This is far from being the case, but they do help us to understand how St. Cyril, the great champion of the Theotokos, can have ascribed some imperfection of weakness to the Blessed Virgin, (although as Newman has pointed out, "he does not, strictly speaking, say more than that our Lady was grievously tempted,"[1]) and yet have written such glowing panegyrics as the following:

---

[1] *Exposit.* in Ps. xliv.

[2] *In Matt.*, Hom. IV. 4.

[3] Thus St. Cyril writes, in this connection, not of γυνή (a woman) but of τὸ γύναιον (woman's nature). It is noteworthy that Origen writes: "The Angel salutes Mary with a word κεχαριτωμένη, which I do not remember to have met elsewhere in the Scriptures. [Note the surprise with which he continues.] *Not even to a man* has a like word been addressed. 'Hail, full of grace.' For Mary alone is this reserved."—Hom. VI., *In Luc.*, xiii.

St. Cyril's witness.

> "Hail Mary, Mother of God, through whom John and the Jordan are sanctified and the Devil is cast out. Hail Mary, Mother of God, through whom every faithful soul is saved."[2]

Once more, in another sermon also preached before the Fathers assembled for the Council of Ephesus:

> "Hail from us O Mary, Mother of God. Hail thou that didst contain Him, who cannot be contained, in thy virginal womb; thou, through whom the Holy Trinity is sanctified; through whom the precious Cross is celebrated and venerated throughout the world; through whom heaven rejoices, through whom angels and archangels are made glad; through whom devils are put to flight; through whom Satan, the tempter, fell from Heaven; through whom the fallen creature is received up into the Heavens; through whom all creation that was held fast by the madness of idolatry, has come to the knowledge of the truth; through whom holy Baptism has come to believers, and the oil of gladness; through whom the nations are brought to repentance.

---

[1] *Letter to Pusey*, p. 141.

[2] *Encomium in Deiparam.*

> And what shall I say more? Through whom the Only-begotten Son of God has shone forth for those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; through whom the Prophets prophesied, through whom the Apostles preach salvation to the nations, through whom the dead are raised and kings reign —by the power of the Holy Trinity. But who is able to speak of the much-hymned Mary?"[1]

The Office Tenebræ.

During the ceremony known as the office of *Tenebræ* (Matins and Lauds of the last three days of Holy Week) fourteen candles are extinguished one by one, but the fifteenth is left unextinguished. After this manner the Church is held by some to show forth symbolically her belief that, whilst for a while the Faith even of the Apostles wavered, and was almost extinct (they all were scandalised at the Passion and Death of their Master), the light of Mary's Faith remained undimmed.[2]

It does not, however, follow from this that our Lady was not *tempted* against Faith, nor does it even follow that, to quote Origen, her "thoughts did not tear her asunder," when she beheld her Son "crucified and dying, and subject to human torments," and knew that He "at last had with tears complained and said: 'Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me.'"[3]

---

[1] Hom. IV. *Cf.* Hom. XI., p. 1032 *seq.* *Cf.* p. 398.
[2] *Cf. Gavantus Thesaurus*, Tom. II., Sectio Sexta, cap. xiii., 22.
[3] *In Luc.*, Hom. XVII.

Moreover, the agony caused by such temptation (supposing that this were allowed to assail our Lady), together with her desolation and abandonment beneath the Cross, until at last Christ spoke to her the word that told of His loving care—may well have had its share in the mystic piercing of her soul foretold by Simeon.

Witness of St. Paulinus.

Thus, even in the West, St. Paulinus of Nola wrote to St. Augustine:

> "Are we to understand Simeon to be prophesying of Mary's passion which is nowhere recorded—or not rather, of her maternal affection through which later on, at the time of the Passion, when standing by the Cross whereon her own Child was crucified, her mother's heart was transfixed by sorrow, and that sword of the Cross which pierced her Son with wounds according to the flesh, before her very gaze, penetrated also her own soul? . . . Thus was it with Mary, who was tortured by the grief of her inward affection. For it was especially her mother's thought that had led her to the Cross of our Lord, in whom she then contemplated only the Son of her own Body, so that when she saw Him dead, she mourned over Him through the weakness that belongs to human nature, and gave herself up to His being buried, without taking to herself any encouraging thought concerning His Resurrection, because the suffering of His Passion then set before her eyes cast a film over her faith in the Wonder which was to follow."[1]

---

[1] "Nihil sibi de Ipsius Resurrectione præsumens, quia subsecuturæ admirationis fidem in oculis posita Passionis pæna cæcabat."

This last sentence contains the only words which can be quoted from any orthodox Western Father,[1] suggesting the slightest doubt as to the perfection of our Lady's Faith during the Passion—and no real doubt, as we shall see in a moment, is cast even by these words, written as they were with the greatest hesitation. "On Simeon's words," continues St. Paulinus, "I confess my soul is in the dark."[2]

The Compassion of Mary.

In the inspired account of the Passion of our Saviour we find things that, unless they were recorded under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we should hesitate to attribute to the Creator. Such is the account of the bitter Agony in the Garden, when the Heart of Christ was so troubled that he suffered a Sweat of Blood, and the Precious Blood actually fell upon the ground beneath the olive-trees; such were the words wrung from His dying Lips: "My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" It is clear that our Lord allowed His Human Soul to be attacked by feelings of fear, dread, even hesitation, terrible apprehensions.

---

[1] On the attitude of Tertullian, after his fall into schism and heresy, towards the Blessed Virgin, see *Marie dans l'Église Anténecéenne*, by M. Neubert, pp. 231-237.

[2] In answer to St. Paulinus, St. Augustine wrote that he was sending him a copy of another letter on the subject which unfortunately has been lost. He continued that, in his view, "we may believe that tribulation is signified under the word sword, by which her mother's soul was wounded with her sorrow"—the interpretation which nowadays is universally accepted.

Feelings such as these involve not the slightest imperfection, as long as they are kept in check by the will. But, as we have already insisted,[1] His Blessed Mother—so far as was possible for a creature—shared all the Sufferings of her Son. The Passion of Jesus was the mould in which was cast and fashioned the Compassion of Mary. Surely, then, we need in no way be surprised if fear, and even doubt, attacked our Lady's soul in the dread hour of her travail. She bore Christ painlessly and joyously at Bethlehem, she bore us poor sinners with much agony of spirit on Mount Calvary. As the Presence of the Father was obscured mysteriously but truly from the dying Christ, though His Human Soul ever possessed the Beatific Vision, even so it may reverently be surmised that *the thought* of the Resurrection may possibly have been veiled from His Mother beneath the Cross, though never for a moment did her Faith waver. There may have been, as it were, a film of darkness over her eyes. And St. Paulinus suggests no more than this. The words of St. Theodotus of Ancyra are undoubtedly true:

Witness of St. Theodotus of Ancyra.

> "But why, old man, dost thou [Simeon] mingle bitter things with glad? Hitherto light and glory hast thou foretold; but now dost thou announce ruin and depictest thou a sword for the Mother of the Babe? Assuredly, says he: All will come to pass in their season, ruin to the unbelieving, resurrection to the faithful

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 104.

> . . . Her virginal soul too will at times have torment from various thoughts coming in and going out."[1]

Such thoughts, temptations from without, came—we cannot doubt it—to our Lady as to her Divine Son; victoriously dealt with, they played a large part in her sanctification, as in that of all her children.

The Source of Temptations.

Temptations may assail us from three sources—from within, from without (through our senses), and directly from the suggestions of evil spirits. Temptations from within could not attack either our Lord or His Holy Mother, for such temptations are a consequence of the Fall, and arise from what is called the concupiscence that remains in us, even after Baptism. We still experience a certain disorder—an unruliness of our appetites—often a rebellion of what is termed the flesh, which impels us to sin. In the case of Jesus Christ and of His Mother Mary, any such onslaught from within was impossible, as it was also to our first parents before the Fall. In our Lord, His Human Nature was hypostatically united to the Godhead. In the soul of His Immaculate Mother, from the first moment of her being, there reigned the perfect harmony which could suffer no disturbance. But both to Jesus and Mary temptation might come, and did come, from the visible world and also from the direct onslaughts of Satan. It would be a great mistake to suppose that merit can only be acquired with difficulty and by hard endeavour. Were it so, the Saints, to whom, through long years of struggle, virtue has become easy, would acquire no merit by good works done at the close of life, often with scarcely an effort. Merits are heaped up through correspondence with the grace of God, even though the correspondence may, at the moment, present no difficulty. Still, there is no doubt that when a struggle is necessary, it enormously enhances merit. We have a High Priest who is able to compassionate us because He too was tempted—so were all His Saints—so was His spotless Mother.

---

[1] Hom. IV., *In Deip. et Simeon*, N. 13.

We are told that oftentimes, especially in the case of exceptionally holy persons, Satan is allowed, for the increase of their merits, to assault them fiercely before their death. The Evil One at that hour rages unremittingly, knowing that his time is short. Perhaps it was for the comfort and strengthening of His Servants that our merciful Lord allowed His Soul to be thus troubled before He died upon the Cross and peace finally settled upon His Spirit. But, as the temptations of Jesus in no way tarnished His ineffable Sanctity, so was it with the temptations—however severe and terrible they may have been—of His Mother Mary. They all belonged to the economy of God's loving dealings with her sinless soul.

Belief of Orientals in our Lady's Sinlessness.

This, then, is the feeling of all Catholics the world over concerning the absolute sinlessness of Mary—a feeling which, as it is a pleasure to acknowledge, is shared by Greeks, Copts, Nestorians, Armenians, by all Christians—Schismatics as well as Catholics—throughout the East. All confess that the Blessed Mother of God lived a life on earth free from the slightest taint of sin or imperfection. We all, whether we be Orientals or Latins, believe that within her beautiful soul every passion was regulated according to the Mind of her Son, her will perfectly conformed to His Will, her heart in all its affections united to His Most Sacred Heart. On this subject Catholics are sensitive in a way that Protestants often fail to understand—sensitive in the first place, because we know that the honour of Mary's Divine Son is at stake, but sensitive also for her own sake, who is our Mother. We know that our Lord Jesus Christ is the *Creator* who has assumed our nature, and that therefore in the Human Nature of the Word made Flesh, we may find the example of all conceivable perfection in Humanity; we know also that Mary the Virgin is the perfect *creature*—God's ideal of perfect womanhood, without flaw or blemish, in its exquisite realisation in the Most Holy Mother of our Lord. We know that when Wisdom deigned to build for Himself a House, He fashioned a living Temple peerless and incomparable, worthy of its builder.

Mary is the great Gift of God to a sin-laden world, prepared by His Hand from all Eternity—responsive in her life to every inspiration of His grace—thus to be made the shrine in which His Son should delight to dwell when He would visit His people—the most pure Throne upon which His Son should rejoice to be seated, that He might show Himself to His chosen ones, and reign as King over the hearts of men.

CHAPTER IX

MARY'S VIRTUES

Multæ filiæ congregaverunt divitias: tu supergressa es universas.—PROVERBS xxxi. 29.

MANY of God's daughters have amassed spiritual riches in His sight. Mary has surpassed them all. Vast beyond compare, beyond thought, was the treasure of her merits which she placed in the Heart of her Son. These merits were acquired by our Lady—as supernatural merit can only be acquired—through the practice of virtue—that is, by good works performed in co-operation with the grace of our Redeemer. The Holy Mother of God lived, not merely free from any taint of sin or imperfection. This is in itself something negative. She ascended the mountain of perfection, step by step, advancing from grace to grace, from strength to strength, until she stood on the very hilltop—at a height to which none other born of woman—save only her Divine Son—dare aspire—thence to pass, her earthly task at last accomplished, to receive the crown of justice prepared for her from all Eternity.

Our Lady's Merits.

When we think of one of our friends, or form a mental picture of any great man known to us from the pages of history, or delineated in some work of imagination, we are accustomed to find light and shade in the portrait. It is a truism that everyone has his faults. In the case of the Saints we find that these faults—their natural tendencies to sin, to which sometimes they yielded, have often become occasions of merit, and have been turned into stepping-stones to sublime sanctity. For example, even amongst the Saints, St. Francis of Sales is conspicuous for his meekness and gentleness, yet we are told that he was by nature of a choleric disposition. Even in mature life—so we read—when something was said that he disliked, he would smile sweetly, but those who knew him well and were standing by, observed the flush of tell-tale colour suddenly coming to the cheek, showing that the tendency to anger was there still, notwithstanding years of patient struggle for self-mastery. Who would have it otherwise? Who would have St. Peter otherwise than we find his character portrayed in the Gospels? The impulsiveness, the rashness, the chivalrous impetuosity of the Prince of the Apostles—often leading him astray—make him lovable to all who are conscious of their own miseries.

Our Lady's Perfection.

But we can find nothing of this kind in Mary. What we might call monotonous and colourless in others, in her is sublime perfection. For all others are fallen and have inherited various tendencies which it should be a part of the main business of life to subdue and regulate. But our Lady, though altogether human, is unfallen. It is this great fact, together with her unique dignity as Mother of God, which places her in a category apart from all other creatures. In Christ's sinless Mother we behold pure human nature at its very highest. She is the Queen of all the Saints, set by her Lord upon a Throne which none can share. Yet Mary's glory and her privilege are the glory and the privilege of all womanhood, crowned in her who is our glorious Mother. To say it once again—she is the realised perfection of created personality.

We speak of the *character* of Caligula, or of Charles the First, or of Julius Cæsar, or of St. Peter, or of St. Paul, or of the Magdalen—but no one dare write of the *character* of Christ or of His Mother. For a character involves inequalities, unevenness, at least some want of balance—faults as well as virtues; but our Lord Jesus Christ is the All Holy, and His Mother is immaculate in her origin and sinless in her life. The signs of frailty (in no way sinful in themselves) to be found in all other men and women, which often attract us towards them, which, in a true sense we may, without fault, delight to find even in the Saints, which make us love them, which give us a fellow-feeling of sympathy that would else be impossible, would distress us unspeakably were we to find them (as, needless to say, we never can find a trace of them) in Jesus or in Mary.

Our Lord the Supreme Model.

The fact that no disorder was possible within the Soul of Christ—that all was perfectly ordered in the depths of His inmost Human Nature—made it possible for Him to propose Himself to us as our Example. *Learn of Me*, He has said. No Saint could dare to say this of himself absolutely. "Be ye imitators of me," St. Paul ventured to write to converts to Christianity, who were of necessity still ignorant in great measure of the Christian virtues—but only "imitate me" so far "as I am an imitator of Christ." In every age, as we read the Lives of the Saints, we find them imitating their Master, striving faithfully to walk in His Footsteps. The virtues of the Man Christ Jesus are faithfully represented in His Saints—one great servant of God imitating conspicuously the meekness and humility of His Heart, another His prolonged prayer, another His zeal for His Father's Glory, yet another His love for the souls of men. But our Lady imitated her Son, as perfectly as a creature could, in *all* virtue.

"Mary," says St. Thomas, "practised every virtue. Other Saints were conspicuous for certain virtues—

one was given us as an example of humility, another of chastity, another of mercy, but the Blessed Virgin of all virtues."[1]

So also St. Antoninus: "In Mary the Virgin are found the perfections of all the Saints."[2]

There is a beautiful tradition, caught at by many devout painters, which tells us that in His Human Features our Lord resembled His Blessed Mother, so that when He was yet a Child, those passing Him in the streets would say, as they looked upon His Face: "There is the Son of Mary of Nazareth." However this may be, it is certain that in the dispositions of her soul our Lady was marvellously near to the dispositions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. She is called by the Church *Speculum Iustitiæ*, the Mirror reflecting the Image of her Lord. It is, then, indeed good for us to strive to imitate her as she imitated Christ, to watch the manner in which she reflected the Divine Example.

Throughout this book I am endeavouring constantly to keep before the minds of my readers the virtues of the Blessed Mother of God. Thus when we dwelt on her Sorrows and Joys, who could have failed to note Mary's obedience and patience, her submission in all things to the holy Will of God? It may, however, be well to devote some space to the considerations of her virtues one

Our Lady's Virtues.

---

[1] IV. pars. tit. XV., cap. xiv.

[2] *Opus*, viii.

by one—for the various perfections of her immaculate soul, but especially her faith and hope and charity, her perfect example of prayer to God, her sublime humility, her spotless purity and her absorbing love for her Incarnate Lord should never be forgotten by her children.

St. Bernard's Witness.

St. Bernard writing on the words: "Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars,"[1] first shows that by Wisdom is here signified Christ our Lord, and that the house thus built by God is the Blessed Virgin Mary. By the seven pillars he understands the adornment of Faith and Morals, by the presence of which there might be prepared a fitting dwelling for the Lord:

> "Assuredly the threefold number belongs to Faith, in consequence of the Holy Trinity; the fourfold to Morals on account of the four cardinal virtues. That the Holy Trinity dwelt in Mary (dwelt, I mean by the Presence of the Divine Majesty, where the Son alone dwelt by taking upon Himself Humanity) is testified by the heavenly Ambassador when he said: 'Hail, thou that art full of grace, *the Lord* is with thee,' and after a short while: 'the *Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee, and *the Virtue of the Most High* shall overshadow thee.' Behold! You have the Lord, you have the Virtue of the Most High, you have the Holy Ghost. You have the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

---

[1] Prov. ix. 1.

The four cardinal virtues are Fortitude, Temperance, Prudence, and Justice.

Our Lady's Fortitude the Saint proves after this wise:

> "How could this virtue be lacking to her, who, having cast away the pomps of the world, and despised the delights of the flesh, determined to live, in virginity, for God alone? Unless I be mistaken, this Virgin is she of whom we read in the writings of Solomon: 'Who shall find a valiant woman? Her worth is far off and from the ends of the earth.'"[1]

Mary's Temperance, Prudence, and Justice are shown from her colloquy with the Angel:

> "When she was saluted so worshipfully by the Angel: 'Hail thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee,' she did not puff herself up, as one might easily do who was thus blessed with a singular privilege of grace, but kept silence, and considered within herself what this unwonted Salutation might portend. What then was she, save *Temperate*, in her dealings? But when she had been taught by the Angel concerning the heavenly mysteries, she carefully asked how this might be, since she knew not man. In this, without a doubt, she showed her *Prudence*. Moreover, she gave a noble proof of *Justice* in confessing herself to be the Handmaid of the Lord. For the Psalmist bears witness as to what is the Confession of the Just, when he writes: 'But the Just shall confess Thy Name.'[2] The Blessed Virgin Mary then showed

---

[1] Prov. xxxi. 10.

[2] Ps. cxxxix. 14.

> *Fortitude* in her purpose, *Temperance* in her silence, *Prudence* in her questioning, *Justice* in her confession. So by these four columns of Morals, and by the three of Faith, the Heavenly Wisdom built for Himself a house in her, and so filled her soul, that from its fulness her flesh itself was made fruitful, and the Virgin by a singular grace gave birth to the same Wisdom clothed in flesh, whom already she had conceived in her pure soul."[1]

Whilst reading these words of St. Bernard, I have often wondered that the holy Doctor did not apply the three columns to the three theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, rather than to faith in the Blessed Trinity.

Our Lady's Faith.

The virtue of Faith we cannot find in the Soul of our Divine Lord, for Faith is "the evidence of things we see not," and the Human Soul of Christ ever beheld the open Vision of the Godhead. It was not so with Mary. On earth she was still "in the estate of the way"; her soul had not yet reached its final resting-place. On earth she saw not, and yet believed.[2] With reason might St. Irenæus declare: "That which Eve bound by her faithlessness Mary loosed by her believing."

---

[1] *De Domo divinæ Sapientiæ, id est de Beata Maria Virgine Sermo LII. de diversis.*

[2] Famous theologians, amongst them St. Bernard, Albert the Great, St. Antoninus, Gerson, Denis the Carthusian, St. Bernardine of Siena, St. Thomas of Villanova, Suarez, Vasquez and Billuart, held as a pious opinion that the Blessed Virgin on certain occasions momentarily enjoyed the Beatific Vision, as this wonderful privilege seems to have been bestowed upon St. Paul. But it is certain that, if so, it was only in a passing manner. *Ubi videtur, ibi non creditur.*

> "Mary," in the beautiful words of St. Alphonsus, "had more faith than all men and than all the angels. She saw her Son in the Stable of Bethlehem and believed that He was the Creator of the world. She saw Him before Herod and did not cease to believe that He was the King of kings. She saw Him born and believed that He was the Eternal. She saw Him live as a poor Man, wanting the necessities of life, and believed Him to be the Master of the Universe. She saw Him lying upon the straw and believed Him to be the All-powerful. She observed that He spoke not and believed Him to be the Everlasting Wisdom. She heard Him mourning in sorrow and believed that He was the Joy of Paradise. She saw Him at the end exposed in His death to scorn and reproaches—crucified—and though the faith of the others was shaken, she believed Him to be God."[1]

We have already considered at some length the wondrous faith exhibited in consistent strength and vigour throughout our Lady's life. Great was the faith of Abraham—held up to us in Holy Scripture as the model of Faith—greater far the faith of Mary. Abraham exercised his faith at the chief crises of his life; Mary's faith was tried and found perfect throughout her days—notably at the Annunciation, at Bethlehem, in Egypt, at Nazareth, during the years of the Public Ministry, finally on Mount Calvary. Under all circumstances, however unexampled, were the words spoken first by Elisabeth marvellously verified: "Blessed art thou that hast believed." Blessed indeed was Mary in that she believed always in the Word of God—believed without faltering, believed in the face of all difficulty, believed to the end.

---

[1] *Glories of Mary*, "Mary's Virtues," Chapter iv.

Our Lady's Hope.

Hope is the flower of Faith. The more firmly we believe in God's promises, in His Power to fulfil them, in His Divine Faithfulness, in His loving Providence in our regard, the more firmly shall we hope in Him, hoping, it may be, even against hope. Thus it was with our Blessed Lady. As her faith was tried, so was her hope, but the measure of her hope was the measure of her faith. We cannot do better than listen once more to St. Alphonsus:

> "Mary showed how great was her confidence in God when she saw that her spouse St. Joseph, not knowing the cause of her miraculous conception, was troubled and minded to put her away. It would have seemed that it was necessary to disclose this sacred mystery to Joseph; but no, she would not herself make known the grace which she had received. She thought that it would be more perfect to abandon herself to Divine Providence, throwing upon God the care of guarding her innocence and reputation. Once more she showed her confidence in God, when on the point of giving her Son to the world, she found herself at Bethlehem,

> shut out even from the hospitality which is given to the poor, and reduced to giving birth to her Child in a stall. She let no complaint escape her, but abandoning herself completely to the Lord, she trusted Him that He would come to her aid in her necessity. . . .
>
> "The confidence of the Mother of God in Divine Providence was no less manifest when, on being warned by St. Joseph that she must fly into Egypt, she got ready, that same night, to make such a long journey into a strange and unknown land, without provisions, without money, none with her save the Child Jesus and her poor spouse.
>
> "Mary gave a still greater proof of her confidence when she asked of her Son the miracle of the wine at Cana . . . after an answer which seemed to point out to her that her prayer was rejected, nevertheless, relying upon His Goodness, she told the waiters to do whatever her Son should say to them, sure as she was that the favour which she asked would not be refused."[1]

No Saint has ever taken to heart in the same measure as did our Blessed Lady—especially during the bitter days of the Sacred Passion—the words of the wise man: "He who has placed his hope in the Lord shall never be confounded."[2] Even as Mary's perfect faith was the foundation of all her joys, so did her constant confidence in God stay and sustain her soul in its dread agony. With reason, then, the Church applies to the Mother of God the words of Holy Scripture: "I am the Mother of holy Hope."

---

[1] *Glories of Mary*, "Our Lady's Virtues," Chapter v.

[2] Eccles. ii. 11.

She is also "the Mother of beautiful Love."[1]

Love (or Charity) is, we know, the bond of perfection and the end of our religion. When faith has been swallowed up in sight, and hope has passed away in full fruition, charity shall yet remain. We will, therefore, reserve for the conclusion of this chapter the consideration of Mary's love of God and man, and proceed to devote a few pages to her humility and purity and holy prayer.

Our Lady's Humility.

By humility is understood the recognition of the creature that all the good that he possesses, whether in the natural or supernatural order, has come to him from God and from God alone. "Our sufficiency is of God," writes the Apostle.[2] Again, he asks the question: "What hast thou which thou didst not receive? If, then, thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?"[3] By pride—the vice directly opposed to humility—a creature arrogates to himself the claim to glory in the gifts that have been bestowed upon him, as though he owed them in some way to himself. Further, the man who is humble, recognising his own nothingness, and it may be his own sins, will, in proportion to the depth of his humility, be anxious to keep himself in the background, whereas he that is proud will be anxious, once again in proportion to the extent of his pride, to be prominent, thought well of, praised, and to have his name constantly on the lips of men. It may be observed, in passing, that before Christianity introduced a new standard of life, humility was nowhere regarded as a virtue. Many virtues were possessed by the old Romans. Fortitude, temperance, prudence, justice, were all recognised by them as praiseworthy; loyalty they understood and practised, truthfulness, and love of friends and kin. In many high qualities they stand out predominant, but humility, as Christians understand it, they would never have praised. To them it would have seemed a characteristic fitting only for slaves. Magnanimity, splendour, munificence they praised highly, but humility they would have despised and spurned, as we to-day despise and spurn the mock, false humility of a Pecksniff or a Uriah Heep. It remained for Christ by precept, and above all by the pattern of His life, to teach those who had eyes wherewith to see and ears wherewith to hear, the beauty of sincere humility. When the Divine Master said to His Disciples: "Learn of Me," not to work miracles, not to create the world out of nothing, but to be "meek and humble of heart," He struck a new note until then unheard on earth. He taught a doctrine until then untaught. And yet Mary had learned the heavenly lesson, breathed into her soul by the Spirit of God, before Christ came—so that St. Bernard has written, "Mary pleased God by virginity, by humility she conceived Him." It was the lowliness of His chosen creature which above all wooed and won the Heart of her Creator. I cannot refrain from quoting St. Bernard's own words:

---

[1] Ecclus. xxiv. 24: "Ego Mater pulchræ dilectionis et timoris et sanctæ spei."

[2] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

[3] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

> "To whom was the Angel Gabriel sent by God? To 'a Virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph.' Who is this Virgin so worshipful that she be saluted by an Angel, so humble that she has been espoused to a carpenter? Beautiful is the mingling of virginity and humility; great indeed is the delight of God in that soul whose humility makes virginity praiseworthy, whose virginity adorns humility. But of how great veneration is she worthy, whose humility is exalted by her fruitfulness, whilst her Childbearing gives consecration to her virginity? Thou hearest that she is a Virgin, thou hearest that she is humble of heart; if thou canst not imitate the virginity of the humble one, do thou imitate the humility of the Virgin. Virginity is to be esteemed, but humility is more necessary. The one is of counsel, the other of precept. To the one thou art invited, to the other thou art compelled. Of the one is said: 'He that can take it, let him take it';[1] of the other: 'Unless a man be made as this little child, he shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven.'[2] Accordingly the one is rewarded, the other is demanded. Therefore without virginity thou canst be saved, without humility thou canst not be. The humility, I assert,

---

[1] Matt. xix. 12.

[2] *Id.* xviii. 3.

> which weeps over virginity that has been lost, can be pleasing to God; but without humility, I dare to say it, not even Mary's virginity would have pleased the Lord. 'Upon whom,' He asks, 'shall My Spirit rest, save upon him that is humble.'[1] Yes, 'Upon the humble,' He has said, not 'upon the Virgin.' Unless, therefore, Mary had been humble, the Holy Spirit would not have rested upon her. How then without His overshadowing could she have conceived by Him? It is, then, clear, as she herself has said, that when she was to conceive by the Holy Spirit, God regarded the lowliness of His Handmaiden—the lowliness rather than the virginity. Thus, if she pleased God by her virginity, still by her humility she conceived Him. From which it is clear that it was humility beyond a doubt which caused even the virginity of Mary to be pleasing to God."[2]

On this subject, however, Bourdaloue has the following observations in one of his sermons:

> "We would know what above all caused God to raise Mary to the Divine Maternity. Some think that it was in consequence of her profound humility, of her heroic obedience (the inevitable fruit of true humility), of her perfect submission to the commands of God, that she found grace in His sight. Others attribute this grace, or, to speak more correctly, this glory which she received from God, to her angelic purity, by which she was already, as a Virgin, the Spouse of God. Let us, O Christians, join the one to the other and say with St. Bernard that this peerless Virgin conceived the Word of

---

[1] Isaias lxvi. 2.

[2] *De Laudibus Mariæ*, Hom. I. 5.

> God both by her humility and her virginity. *Virginitate placuit, humilitate concepit.* . . . Her humility ravished Heaven. Her humility it was which drew the Word of God from His Father's Side, and led Him to descend from the Throne of His Glory to the depths of our nothingness. For here especially is verified the saying of the Royal Prophet that abyss calls to Abyss.[1] Whilst Mary humbles herself before God, the Word of God annihilates Himself in her. The Virgin's abyss of humility attracts another Abyss, far deeper, nothing less than the annihilation of God."[2]

There is an incentive to humility which, in the very nature of the case, could not come to Mary—the incentive that arises from the memory of past sins. Our Lady could not say with St. Paul, as he remembered that he had at one time "persecuted the Church of God," "Of sinners I am the chief;" neither was it her lot to humble herself with the thought that, like St. Peter, she had denied her Lord and Master. We who, all of us, have committed sins—perhaps great sins—can have no excuse for pride. But Mary was sinless. There is, however, a spur to humility afforded not by the remembrance of ingratitude and unfaithfulness to God, but by the thought of the absolute dependence of our nature for all that is good upon the divine grace. This thought was ever present to the minds of all the Saints. Should a man having his loins girt, and the lamp enkindled in his hand, forget this, he will incur, even whilst doing his good works, the condemnation of the Pharisee. Should he allow himself to dwell with complacency upon anything that he has done, forgetting the warning not to let his left hand know that which his right hand doth, then he that thinketh he standeth shall soon fall deep into sin. Our Blessed Lady is the most humble of all God's creatures, because never for any instant of her life did she fail to acknowledge that all that she had, she possessed as God's free gift. Her immunity from sin, no less than every action pleasing to her Lord, was due to His loving care and providence. Of herself, she knew full well, she was as nothing—her one desire was to do His Holy Will to whom she owed her all.

---

[1] Ps. xli.: "Abyssus Abyssum invocat."

[2] *Premier Sermon sur l'Annonciation de la Vierge.* It is hardly necessary to say that Bourdaloue here uses the expression *annihilate Himself* and *the anhihilation of God*—not strictly, but in the sense in which St. Paul used the word—to signify the ineffable Mystery of the Incarnation.

We have already had occasion to glance at this humility of our Lady, which made her so well-pleasing to God at the solemn hour of the Annunciation, when, in the very moment of her exaltation, she professed herself to be the servant of her Lord; at the Visitation when she referred at once Elisabeth's magnificent words of welcome, veneration and praise, not to herself but to her Creator—her sublime Blessedness she could not deny, but would proclaim that it was His doing, not her own;

during the desolation of the Passion, when she shared the ignominies heaped upon her dying Son, crucified between two thieves. Always, so far as depended upon herself, our Lady retired into the shadow—even though it was the shadow of the Cross; therefore was it that the Hand of the Most High has gently drawn her forth into the undimmed light that is reflected from the Splendour of His Brightness, whom she clothed with the vesture of Humanity. In the person of God's Mother has His promise been most gloriously fulfilled: he that humbleth himself shall be exalted—exalted above the Cherubim and the Seraphim, for our Lord hath regarded the humility of His Handmaiden, whilst the rich and those that are wise in their own conceits He hath sent empty away.

Our Lady's Purity.

Intimately connected with the humility of our Lady is her spotless purity. God giveth grace to the humble and rejecteth the proud. The grace which He deigned to bestow upon Mary's humility was the Divine Maternity. God chose her from all creatures to be His Virgin Mother. It is this mystery of virginity in motherhood that, above all, caused the Fathers again and again to break forth in praises of the Maiden-Mother. St. Ambrose in particular, throughout his treatise on virginity, never tires of extolling our Lady, in whose life he finds every virtue appropriate to her sublime vocation.

> "Therefore," writes the holy Doctor, "you should have before you the life of Mary, in which you may behold, as it were in a mirror, chastity and the pattern of virtue. The nobility of a teacher will immediately set on fire the ardour of the disciple. Who can be more noble than the Mother of God? Who more splendid than she whom Splendour chose? Who more chaste than she who gave birth to a Body without any detriment to her own body? But what shall I say of her other virtues? She was a virgin not only in body, but also in mind[1] . . . humble of heart, grave of speech, prudent in mind, restrained in conversation, devoted to reading, placing her hopes, not in the uncertainty of riches, but in the prayers of the poor, devoted to duty, modest in her words, accustomed to weigh the judgments of God, not of man, to injure none, to wish well to all, to show deference to her elders, to have no grudge against her neighbours, to fly boastfulness, to love virtue."

St. Ambrose continues in impassioned language to insist upon our Lady's virtues in all possible relations of her life, and continues:

> "In such a manner did she discharge all the duties of life as not to learn, but to teach. Such was she of whom the Evangelist has drawn the picture; such was she whom the angel found, whom the Holy Ghost has chosen. And why should I linger to point out how her parents loved her, how strangers praised her, how she was worthy that the Son of God be born of her. . . . How good she

---

[1] *Cf.* St. Augustine, Lib. IV., *De doct. Christ.*, c. 21.

was to her kinsfolk the Holy Scripture points out. For she became even more humble when she knew that she had been chosen by God, and went at once to her kinswoman in the hill-country—not that she might believe by seeing another, for she had already believed the Divine Word. 'Blessed art thou that hast believed,' said Elisabeth. And she remained with her three months. During so long a period she did not seek to strengthen her faith, but showed forth her goodness. And this even after the child, leaping in his mother's womb, had saluted the Mother of his Lord, having been filled with devotion, before the time assigned by nature. . . . She kept all these things in her heart. Although she was the Mother of the Lord, she desired to learn His commandments, and she who had given birth to God desired to know God. . . . Such was Mary, so that her life alone suffices for the instruction of all. How many different kinds of virtues shine forth in this one Virgin. . . . O how many virgins will she not come to meet; how many will she not, in her embrace, bring to the Lord, saying: 'Here is one that hath kept with unstained purity the bridal bed, the nuptial chamber of my Son.' . . . Therefore let Holy Mary set the pattern for the fashion of our life. . . . But someone may say: 'Why have you brought forward the example of Mary, as though anyone could be found who could imitate the Mother of the Lord?'"[1]

It is not without significance that St. Augustine, when he would praise the style of Ambrose, his father in the Faith, as *temperate* and ornate, chooses as a specimen a passage in which St. Ambrose extols at length the virtues of our Lady.[1] The style of Augustine is not the style of Ambrose; their doctrine in all things concerning our Lord and His Holy Mother is identical.

---

[1] *De Virginibus*, II., 6—III., 21.

In the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, invocations are heaped up in order to express the Catholic sense of the immaculate purity of the Mother of God. "Mater *purissima*, mater *castissima*, mater *inviolata*, mater *intemerata*, ora pro nobis; *vas spirituale, vas honorabile, vas insigne devotionis, turris Davidica, turris eburnea, domus aurea*, ora pro nobis; Regina *virginum*, ora pro nobis." Where the Church would praise Mary's stainless virginity of soul and body, there can be no redundancy of phrase, nor are the Faithful ever weary of hymning the inviolate sanctity of their immaculate Mother.

It should be carefully borne in mind that the purity which is pleasing to God is not merely a physical freedom from sins of the flesh; it goes far deeper and reaches to the heart and searches the very recesses of the being. The virtue of purity, as Catholics understand it and venerate it in its perfection in the immaculate Mother of our Saviour, keeps in check thoughts and words as well as deeds; yet more, it turns all the thoughts and affections and aspirations of the soul to God our Lord.

---

[1] *De doctrina Christiana*, Lib. iv. 48.

"The pure of heart shall see God." This divine promise is verified not only in the life to come, where alone we can see God as He is, but even in this life where we know God by faith. Any priest, any mother, can be at rest concerning the faith of a youth brought up as a Catholic, however seriously his faith may perhaps be tried by temptations of the intellect, if only that boy—or that young man—is striving to lead a clean life and to keep his heart pure before God. It is an experience which hardly can admit of exception that the Faith will not be lost, so long as the Sacraments are frequented and an effort is made after right living. Unhappily, the converse is also true. Pride continually causes men and women—leading them to rely upon their own strength—to fall into sins against purity—whilst sins of impurity, darkening the spiritual vision, receive their punishment—by no means always, but alas how often—in obscurity of the soul, sometimes even in complete loss of faith. If we would see God hereafter, if we would know God here, our great care should be to seek after holy purity, as a pearl beyond all price. In this effort our Lady will surely aid us, if we entreat her intercession.

"It is the boast of the Catholic religion," writes Newman, "that it has the gift of making the young heart chaste; and why is this, but that it gives us Jesus Christ for our Food and Mary for our

Nursing Mother?"[1] The truth of these words is brought home every day to a priest in the exercise of his sacred ministry. Catholics who neglect their religion are sometimes more immoral than their neighbours. Catholics who use their religion, who go frequently to Holy Communion and love the Blessed Virgin, are so strengthened by divine grace that they lead lives that are angelic amongst their fellow-men. The holy Angels are pure spirits—as such they could never know temptations of a flesh which is not theirs. Christian men, strengthened by the Angels' Bread and guarded by the Angels' Queen, are sorely tempted in a region beyond the Angels' ken, yet learn to overcome.

The strength to persevere and advance in supernatural virtue is given to us in response to prayer. Nor was it otherwise with our Lady during the days of her earthly pilgrimage. She grew in every virtue by means of constant prayer which knit her will into harmony with the Will of her Creator.

Our Lady's Prayer.

From early childhood the Blessed Virgin had devoted herself to the service of God—first in the Temple, then in her holy home at Nazareth—prayerfully awaiting the coming of the Redeemer. Mary united the aspirations of her soul to the cry which was at that hour of expectation arising from the very heart of Israel—yearning for the coming of the Desired of nations—

---

[1] Sermon on *The Fitness of the Glories of Mary.*

above all from maidens consecrated to their Lord.

At last He came. He came to Mary, His Mother, pre-elected from Eternity. The Holy Ghost overshadowed her. When her time was accomplished, her Child was born. Henceforth for thirty years our Lady's life was spent day by day, hour by hour, in the visible Presence of Jesus Christ. It will be well to reflect on what this means from the point of view of prayer.

Before the Incarnation the sinless Virgin was taught to pray by the Holy Spirit, speaking within the depths of her soul. After the Incarnation God abode with his chosen spouse in even closer intimacy, enlightening her mind, inflaming her heart with love; but now (at least after her Son deigned to open His Lips in human speech) the secret inspirations of Heaven were interpreted to Mary by the voice of Christ. The Apostles were one day to beseech their Lord: "Master, teach us to pray." Who can doubt that He had already taught the great lesson to His Blessed Mother? Mary and Joseph were the first disciples in the School of Christ.

Of all virtues the practice of prayer is the most necessary, for without it (in some degree) we can never make progress in the way of life. Prayer is the key that alone unlocks the treasury of Heaven's graces, without which we cannot please God and save our souls. It is the appointed means to our last end, of which nothing else can supply the place. In one sense we may say that in proportion to the necessity of prayer is its ease. At every moment of life, in all circumstances, in every need, the Holy Spirit enables us, if we will, to pray. Yet, experience proves that to most of us—I think to the vast majority of mankind—*sustained* prayer (necessary for the perfection of the soul, as prayer of some kind is necessary for its salvation) is exceedingly difficult. We do not see God, and it is not easy for most of us to speak for any length of time to a Being whom we do not see. Again, we are surrounded by the multitude of things that we do see, whilst our ears are assailed by a multitude of voices haunting and assailing us from the outside world even when we strive to pray. Now, I am far from suggesting that prayer was in every respect easy for Mary—no doubt difficulties and obscurities were allowed to beset her too, as she united her soul to God in contemplation of His Infinite Perfections—but her vocation led her to remove herself from the distractions of the world more completely than any solitary in his cell, and though she did not (at least habitually) see God in His Essence, she lived in the constant company of Jesus Christ. Now, Jesus Christ is God.

We often use the word prayer in its wide sense of beseeching a creature. Sometimes we speak of praying to our friends or to the powerful on earth, as when in a petition we "pray" the Houses of Parliament, or it may be, say, "I pray thee, my father"; sometimes we speak of praying to our Lady and the Saints, as when we ask them to intercede to God for us. But in the restricted sense of the word, prayer is made to God alone. We seek the intercession of our Lady and the Saints that we may obtain the gifts we need for soul and body from the Divine Goodness and Mercy—above all that we may learn to pray, as they prayed, to God, that our souls too may be united to God, on earth by grace, hereafter in open vision. Prayer in its strict sense is simply: "The raising of the soul to God." But —once again let me write it—Jesus Christ is God. When Mary spoke to Jesus Christ her Son, she was in the strictest sense speaking to, uniting her soul to, praying to God.

As we read the Lives of the great Saints, we marvel at the heights of contemplation and ecstasy which they reached—at their union with their Lord. But what was the degree of union reached by any Saint —by Teresa, or John of the Cross, or Francis of Assisi—by the most highly favoured of them all, when measured by that achieved by the soul of Mary in the Temple, at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, on Calvary, afterwards in the house of John? Human thought cannot compass, even in imagination, the elevation and the intimacy and the wonder of Mary's prayer, for no thought of man can penetrate the mystery of the Incarnation and of Mary's consequent nearness to her Son.

Prayer has been well described as familiar intercourse with God. If, then, we are to reach after this holy familiarity to which all Christians are graciously invited, it is of the deepest importance that we should keep before our minds the ineffable communion of soul between the Incarnate God and His Mother to which nothing that has ever passed upon earth can be likened with truth. When we find it hard to pray, God's Mother will aid us, if we lovingly entreat her to help us, to converse with Christ, as she conversed when He dwelt upon the earth. For this is the Will of God even for us. It is His Will that we too should attend to His summons: "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden." It is His merciful Will to welcome the sinful as well as the sinless. The Magdalen stood beneath the Cross together with the Immaculate.

For both there was room, and each had her appointed place. The poor thief cried to Christ with a confidence unknown to the Pharisee, and because of his confidence was heard in the hour of his distress. If we allow ourselves, with Peter affrighted, to say to Christ: "Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man," great indeed is our danger. Never can there be danger to our souls when, with Peter welcomed, we cast ourselves upon the waters to reach our Lord, or, with Peter repentant, raise our eyes to look upon His Face.

Our Lady's Love of God.

The first and greatest commandment is to love God with all the heart. St. Thomas Aquinas has written: "This commandment shall be completely and perfectly fulfilled in the heavenly country (in patria), but only imperfectly in the estate of the way (in via)."[1] However, Blessed Albert the Great, the Master of St. Thomas, has written: "It hardly becomes God to give a commandment which no one has fulfilled; if it was fulfilled by any, it was by the Most Blessed Virgin."[2] Ordinarily, there will linger, even in the greatest Saints, some inordinate attachment to the creature (slight—indeed unrecognised—it may be), which derogates from the complete and perfect love of the Creator. But in Mary no such attachment can be imagined; in her immaculate soul reigned, supreme, the Love of God, in such wise that all was perfectly regulated and subordinated to His Will. In Mary there was no self-seeking, no love of earthly goods that could in any way lessen her love of Him who was alone her first Beginning and last End, to whom alone she owed her all.

Furthermore, in the lives of most men and women who wish to serve God with their whole hearts much perplexity will often arise with regard to the human affections. On the one hand to be without natural affection is classed by the Apostle amongst the greatest crimes,[1] to be without affection for those who love us is, as our Lord says, to be worse than the publicans.[2] A miserable, hard, cold egoism is the punishment that lies in wait for those who live for themselves alone, trampling upon the most sacred ties when those ties stand in the way of their lusts or selfishness. On the other hand it is so terribly easy for even the purest affections to partake in some measure of the nature of idolatry. Not only evil things, not only things in themselves indifferent, but even things in themselves most beautiful, the love of husband for wife, of mother for her child, of friend for friend can sometimes stand in the way of the perfect love of God—not if they be used rightly, but if they become inordinate and are abused. And they are all tragically capable of abuse. The mother, for example, must needs be careful that she loves her child, as God would have her love, in such a way as to draw both herself and the child she loves nearer to God and to His Love, from which all pure love flows, and which in itself is supreme. In other words, it is one of the chief aims of the spiritual life to *supernaturalise* affections that are in themselves, however precious, only natural. Though all pure natural affections come from God, still, through the miseries of our fallen nature, they are capable of leading away from God; if, then, natural affection is to serve not merely a temporal but also an eternal, purpose, it must be raised to a higher level and be made supernatural—that is, be directed to God, to whom we owe it, and subordinated to His Will. But in our Lady the natural love of her Child was blended with the supernatural love of her God, as is possible in no other, for her Child was God. In her the natural and the supernatural mingled and were fused. As she clasped her Child to her heart, she loved Him with a human mother's love—as she adored Him on her knees, she loved Him with the love that is due to the Creator; thus the love that is natural and the love that is supernatural met and became one, without effort on Mary's part, in love directed to the Person of Jesus Christ. No man in the flesh can see God, as He is in His unveiled Godhead, and live. To enable us the better to love God whom we have not seen, He became manifest in the Incarnate Word. One of the chief means whereby we may learn to love God is to study the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this manner is the Love of God made manifest, when we listen to Him who spoke as man never spoke before or shall ever speak again, when we watch Him going about doing good, lovely in all His Ways, when we kneel before the Crib at Christmas, or before the Crucifix showing forth His Passion, or near the Altar where He is hidden in His Sacrament. And yet we have not *seen* our Lord Jesus Christ, but Mary saw Him face to face, and her heart was set on fire and ravished with the love of God. St. Bernard expresses this truth when he writes:

---

[1] *Sum. Theolog.* 2a, IIæ, Q. XXIV., *aa.* 6 et 8.

[2] *Serm. Supra Miss.*, c. lxxvi.

---

[1] Romans i. 31.

[2] Matt. v. 46.

> "The love of God did not merely transfix, it so penetrated the soul of Mary, that it left no corner empty of love.[1] Thus Mary loved with her whole heart, her whole soul, with all her strength, and was able to say: 'My beloved to me, and I to him.'"[2]

Our Lady's Love of Man.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart; thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is a twofold precept which is but one. For the love of man can never be separated from the love of God from which it springs and by which it is commanded. Of Mary's love for her children I have already written in this book.[3] In our Blessed Mother's heart, out of her supreme love for Jesus Christ sprang her love for the souls redeemed at a great cost by the shedding of His Precious Blood—souls in which she saw the reflection of the Image of her dearest Son.

Not long ago a soldier said to me when we were talking on this subject: "According to my idea the love of our Lady for us is so great that there cannot be greater in any human being." Surely he was right, and did but express the instinctive feeling of Catholics. Theologians will tell us that since Mary was a creature, it is always possible that the Infinite Creator might have made her more wonderful than she actually is. No doubt this is true, for it is impossible to limit the power of God. But Mary is the creature whom the Creator actually did create when He would bestow upon the destined Mother of His Son that capacity for love which it beseemed her to possess. With that love Mary's heart was filled—that love she bears not only to her Divine Son, but also to us, who love her too—the earthly children whom God has entrusted to her maternal care.

---

[1] Mariæ animam non solum transfixit, sed etiam pertransiit, ut nullam particulam vacuam amore reliquisset.

[2] Serm. XXIX., *In Cantic.*

[3] See pp. 89-91.

In writing this it seems to me that I have written all. As we reflect upon it, great peace and contentment should possess our souls, and boundless gratitude to God our Saviour.

CHAPTER X

MARY AT CANA

"They have no wine." At Heaven's high feast
That soft petition still hath place,
And bathes—so wills that Kingly Priest
Whose hour *is* come—the worlds with grace.
AUBREY DE VERE.

WE have already, when reflecting on our Lady's Joys and Sorrows, watched her at Nazareth where she was visited by the Angel, at Hebron where she saluted Elisabeth,[1] at Bethlehem where her Child was born, in her flight into Egypt, at Jerusalem in the Temple, once more at Nazareth during the Hidden Life of her Son, on Calvary beneath the Cross. We have already meditated on her virtues as they are exhibited in the setting of her life; soon we shall recall such of her words as have been recorded in the Gospels. But I think that it may be well, before we go further, to devote some space in this chapter and the next to certain incidents in the Public Life of Christ, to which we have already had occasion to make incidental reference. Of these the first is the Wedding Feast at Cana. We will look at this beautiful story especially from the point of view of that which took place immediately before the miraculous changing of the water into wine. Let us endeavour to reconstruct the scene.

---

[1] There is, however, a strong local tradition in favour of identifying "the city of Juda," where the Visitation took place, with Carem, the modern Aïn-Karim, situated some two leagues west of Jerusalem.

Our Lord arrived at Cana.

Arriving from the banks of the Jordan where He had just received the baptism of John, and surrounded by a small band of disciples whom He had recently gathered to His side, our Lord came one day, at the very beginning of His Public Ministry, to Cana in Galilee.

His Blessed Mother there already.

Cana is a village about eight miles from Nazareth. Our Lady was already there, having been invited to the wedding of one of her friends who—as has been thought probable—may have been a member of her family.

In the words of the Gospel: "The Mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited with His disciples."[1] It was an invitation which the custom of the East would have rendered it impossible to refuse; moreover, St. Maximus of Turin is of opinion that by His Presence at this Wedding Feast—

> "Our Lord taught by His example that we should not deny that He is the Author of marriage. The Son of God goes to the nuptials, that He may sanctify by the benediction of His Presence what He had of old instituted by His Power."[2]

---

[1] John ii. 1.

[2] Hom. XXIII., *P.L.*

In reading the account of the miracle at the Wedding Feast it may well be that we are accustomed to think of it as we should think of a wedding breakfast in Europe, where there is a friendly, joyous meal, perhaps with simple, kindly speeches full of goodwill, after which the guests take their departure. It would be only in accordance with these associations of ours to imagine that whilst all were reclining (according to the custom of the Jews) at the Feast, suddenly the wine ran short, and that then our Lady intervened publicly, and the miracle was worked by her Divine Son. Should we have formed any mental picture of this sort, we have forgotten that wedding customs in the East are altogether different from those in the West. In the hospitable East, there is not merely a gathering of an hour or so to wish godspeed to the parting bride and bridegroom; the festivities are prolonged over several days, and the number of guests often is very large. At Cana, judging from the capacity of the stone firkins,[1] which in English measurements would give us about five barrels of thirty-six gallons—the equivalent of some eight hundred bottles—there must have been three or four hundred friends invited to the wedding. It is the Oriental custom for the parents of the bride to busy themselves with the entertainment of the guests, and to leave the actual management of the household details to some trusted kinswoman or intimate friend. It is, therefore, quite possible that our Lady held this position during the Feast. In any case, before there was yet any question of the large party breaking up, the Blessed Virgin observed that the wine was failing. We must guard ourselves from imagining that this was a matter of trifling consequence. Should the supply of wine have ceased, the festivities would have lost all their gaiety, a gloom would have been cast upon all the surroundings, and the family—our Lady's hosts, possibly her relations—would have been taxed with carelessness and want of forethought for the comfort of their guests, at the best reckoning of the situation—with the odious imputation of avarice, at the worst—and this in a country where enormous importance is attached to the cheerfulness that should surround a marriage, as is the case throughout the East. In the East it is not uncommon to see people impoverish themselves for the rest of their lives in order to celebrate with magnificence the marriage of their children.[1] When we remember that in Eastern lands want of hospitality is regarded as one of the most shameful of vices, we shall understand that the

---

[1] John ii. 6.

The wine failed.

---

[1] In Egypt official reports are often issued condemning the waste and exaggerated luxury indulged in by the native population in the celebration of their marriages—and the Government not seldom feels itself obliged to send out instructions on this subject to the people, enforcing economy and simplicity at weddings.

difficulty caused by the sudden failure of the wine was no small matter, as it would be amongst us. But what was to be done? To "order" more wine would have been quite out of the question. In Palestine, especially in a small place like Cana, where the facilities for transit were not abundant, a supply of wine would have had necessarily to be laid up in advance, if it were needed in any large quantities, and to have been stored in big water jugs or water skins, buried in the earth, so as to be at hand when required.

Our Lady's Faith.

Therefore, either a lasting gloom would be cast over the wedding, or there must be a miraculous intervention. The thought of a miracle to be worked by her Divine Son came at once to the mind of Mary. Nor need this in any way surprise us. During the years of the Hidden Life of Christ, the Blessed Virgin lived in the closest state of mystic *supernatural* union with our Lord as God—but she also lived in the sacred intimacies of Nazareth united to Him *naturally* and ordinarily, as a mother is united to her son, in sympathy of heart, sharing His confidence. Surely, she was trusted with His counsels, so far as creature might be. Consequently it was no secret to her that, His public life once begun, miracles would confirm His Doctrine and prove His Godhead. But, that public life already was beginning. After His Baptism by John, which was its prelude, He had chosen His first disciples who were even then in His company. So there was no longer any reason why the Incarnate God should not now show forth His power. Mary knew that the Mission of her Divine Son had been declared by His Baptism and confirmed to the public by the Voice of the Eternal Father and the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Hearing then of the failure of the wine, our Lady left the quarters of the house which according to Oriental custom were generally reserved for the women, to find her Divine Son. Without hesitation she said to Him simply: "They have no wine." The Blessed Virgin felt that it would be enough for her to point out the pressing need for a remedy to be found. Of this she had no doubt whatsoever—so the sequel proves—in her mind. But our Lord answered with words that, at least to us in the West, when translated into English are liable to be gravely misunderstood by those who have departed from the tradition and feeling of the Church.

Her request.

Christ's answer.

In the Protestant versions of the Bible, these words have been translated "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" It is not too much to say that the shock conveyed by listening in church to this rendering of the answer of Christ to His Mother—without comment or explanation of any kind—has been the source of pain, wonderment and dismay to many generations of children brought up in the

Church of England, and I can hardly doubt, also to the children of Nonconformity. I can answer for the effect it produced upon myself in childhood. I used to wince as I heard the words. They seemed so strange, so harsh, so rude, so unnecessary, so utterly out of keeping with the gentleness and love of Christ and with the respect which undoubtedly He owed His Mother—so foreign not only to His Nature, but also to the scene—for even a child could not fail to notice that Mary asked a favour out of the kindness of her heart, and that her Son immediately complied with her request. As a matter of fact this translation, whatever may be said for it on purely linguistic grounds, conveys—as one need not point out to Catholics—an entirely false impression of what was in the Heart of Christ, as well as of the meaning which was conveyed by the actual words He spoke. It is therefore not only an offence, as it stands, against the reverence we owe to the Divine Person of our Lord, but also against Truth. For it in no way represents reality. This I propose to demonstrate.

Use of the word "Woman."

The first word that grates, as applied by Christ to His Mother, is the word: *Woman*. Here a little explanation is all that is necessary. It can easily be shown that the Greek word to be found in the Gospel, like the Aramaic word which it renders, is in itself quite compatible with respect. It is virtually the equivalent of our word Lady. And if a child asks why our Lord called His Blessed Mother *Lady*, rather than *Mother*, it is easy to explain that in the East no grown-up man would ever dream of addressing his mother, in public at least, as "Mother"—this would sound as ridiculous as for a grown-up Englishman to call his mother publicly "Mama." I think, therefore, that the Douay translation (since it is able to place an explanatory footnote) does well in translating *γύναι* literally "*Woman*," for to translate *Lady* would serve no useful purpose. Englishmen do not address their mothers as "Lady." Personally I think that in quoting this passage, when one wishes to do so without delaying over explanations, the most truthful translation is "My Mother," or simply "Mother." This is the way in which men address their mothers in this country, and therefore accurately represents in English the word used by our Lord, who spoke to His Mother according to the manner of speech usual in His time in Syria.

Catholic writers have sometimes emphasised the fact that our Blessed Lady is *The* Woman, who stands for all womanhood as its ideal perfection in the Creative Mind of God, moreover that she is the Woman of Prophecy, between whom and Satan God placed "enmities," who was destined to undo the work of the first woman, our mother Eve. They have surmised that with reference to this truth she may have been addressed by our Lord as "Woman" at Cana, and once again on Calvary: "Woman, behold thy son." For my own part, however, I should not think it well to illustrate the fact of our Lady's co-operation in the Redemption by the use of the word *Woman* by Christ, for the simple reason that He could hardly have used any other word, since there was no other that could have been used by a son to his mother with suitability. We find that our Lord used the expression not only to His Blessed Mother, but also to the Samaritan woman: "Woman, believe me that the hour cometh";[1] to the woman of Canaan: "Woman, great is thy faith";[2] to St. Mary Magdalen after His Resurrection: "Woman, why weepest thou?"[3] Since, then, it was evidently the usual mode of address, it is, I think, impossible to attach any special significance to its use, one way or the other, when we find it employed by Christ at Cana and on Calvary.

T ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί;

We now come to the difficult words—Tί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί; translated, as we have seen, in the Protestant Bible: "What have I to do with thee?"

These words (the equivalent of the Aramaic phrase *ma li valak*) are translated in the Vulgate literally *Quid Mihi et tibi?* and in our Douay version: "*What is to Me and to thee?*" They are immediately followed by the statement of Christ: "Mine hour is not yet come."

---

[1] John iv. 21.

[2] Matt. xv. 28.

[3] John xx. 15.

The Douay translation—as always, severely literal, though, admittedly, not idiomatic—escapes the terrible danger of conveying a false impression as to the meaning of these words of our Lord; whilst the concluding observation of the accompanying note: "Words indicating anger in one tone of voice would be understood quite reversely in another," is undeniably true and, as we shall see, very relevant to the matter under consideration.

The Hebrew expression *Ma li valak* has become in modern Arabic *Ma laki wali*.[1] Whenever the phrase *Ma li valak*, or its equivalent, is to be met with in Holy Scripture, its genuine sense, however it may be translated, is *not* "What have I to do with you?" but "What have you to do with me?"—that is, "Why do you interfere with me in this matter?" I will quote the parallel passages where the phrase occurs, giving the Douay translation, and it will be seen that this is the case.

(1) "And he sent messengers to the King of the children of Ammon, to say in his name: 'What hast thou to do with me, that thou art come against me, to waste my land?'" In other words, "Why

---

[1] *Ana ma li-inta ma lak* are words with which almost every British soldier who has been in Egypt during the late war has become familiar. They are continually in the mouths of the Arabs, and mean simply: "It is not my business."

do *you* interfere with me?" not "Why do *I* interfere with you?"[1]

(2) "And Abisai, the son of Sarvia, said to the King . . . and the King said, *What have I to do with you*, ye sons of Sarvia?" Here the meaning once again is clearly: "Why do you interfere with my business, ye sons of Sarvia?"—King David was not interfering with them.[2]

(3) "And she said to Elias: *What have I to do with thee*, thou man of God? Art thou come to me, lest my iniquities should be remembered?" There can be no hesitation as to the meaning. The Widow asked the Prophet: "Why do *you* interfere with my affairs?" He had gone to her house, not she to his. It may be noted that she was full of veneration for the person she thus addressed.[3]

(4) "And Eliseus said to the King of Israel: *What have I to do with thee?*" The words that immediately follow prove that it should rather have been translated: "What have you to do with me?" —that is, "Why do you come to me?" "Go," it continues, "go to the prophets of thy father and of thy mother."[4]

(5) In the New Testament the devils cried out to our Lord: "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus,

---

[1] Judges xi. 12.

[2] 2 Kings (2 Samuel) xvi. 10 (and again xix. 22).

[3] 3 Kings (1 Kings) xvii. 18.

[4] 4 Kings (3 Kings) iii. 13.

Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before our time?" St. Luke expresses it thus: "I beseech Thee, do not torment me—for He commanded the unclean spirit to go out of the man."[1] The meaning is clear: "Why dost Thou interfere with us?"

There can, then, be no serious doubt as to the meaning of this phrase, *Ma li valak.* It means generally: "Why do you interfere with me?" Sometimes: "Why do you come to me?" At Cana: "Why do you ask Me?" If translators have too often translated "What have I to do with thee?" rather than "What hast thou to do with Me?"[2] they have been misled by the construction of the Greek text, which follows the Hebrew idiom with complete servility.

In any case, the Protestant translators, in order to reproduce the real force of the words, should have substituted "thy request" for "thee." Had they done this, and rendered the phrase "What have I to do with thy request?" not much fault could have been found with the faithfulness of the translation. What is intolerable is the harshness conveyed by the phrase: "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" This translation conveys the absolutely false and injurious impression that our

---

[1] Matt. viii. 29; Mark v. 7, 8; Luke viii. 28, 29.

[2] Dr. Lingard, in his excellent but too little known translation of the Gospels, translates, in accordance with above: "What hast thou to do with Me?" (See *A New Version of the Four Gospels*, by a Catholic, 1836, p. 337.)

Lord was repudiating His Mother, whereas, at the very most, He was apparently refusing her request.

Did Christ appear to refuse our Lady's request?

But, one may ask, did our Lord really even *appear* to refuse His Mother's request when He said to her: "Why do you bring this matter before Me? Why do you ask Me for a miracle? Mine hour is not yet come"? To answer this question with certainty is now impossible. Everything depends upon the tone of voice and manner with which Christ spoke. The words of themselves give us no information on this point. They may conceivably express annoyance; but they may in their context carry the meaning: "My Mother, why do you ask Me? The hour I had fixed for the beginning of miracles has not come. But you know that I cannot refuse you." It is certain from the sacred narrative that our Lady understood them to convey consent, for at once she told the waiters to do our Lord's bidding, evidently expecting the miracle which was so soon to be granted. This does not look like a refusal. And who can fail to see that our Lord's subsequent action is the safest commentary on and explanation of the meaning of His Words?

On the other hand, all the Fathers of the Church who have commented upon this passage see in it a refusal. To this fact due weight must be attached. However, no question of doctrine is here involved, and it would be an exaggeration to think that the opinion even of St. John Chrysostom, or of St. Augustine, is, in a matter of this kind, absolutely decisive. In fact it is impossible to accept all the patristic explanations, since these differ amongst themselves. St. John Chrysostom, for example, makes suggestions that cannot be brought into harmony with those of other Fathers of the Church. St. Augustine holds emphatically that when our Lord said: "Mine hour is not come," He did not refer to His hour for working miracles, but to His hour for acknowledging His Mother upon the Cross;[1] whilst St. Gaudentius suggests that our Lord spoke in mystery, meaning that the wine of the Holy Ghost could not be given to the Gentiles before His Passion and Resurrection.[2] I do not suppose that many persons at the present day will feel drawn to such a mystical explanation as this, which was thought out, in an age when mystical interpretations of Holy Scriptures were very numerous, as a means of dealing with a difficulty. The difficulty consists in the apparent contradiction involved in the fact that our Lord worked the miracle immediately after having stated that His hour had not yet come—His hour (as the context seems to me on the whole to suggest) for the working of miracles. If this be the true meaning of the expression *Mine hour*, it is impossible to accept such an interpretation of the passage as that, for example, of St. Augustine.[1]

---

[1] *In Joan. Tract.*, viii. 4-9; *De Fide et Symb.*, vi. 9. Cardinal Newman seems to adopt this view, at least tentatively, in his *Letter to Dr. Pusey*, in which he writes (p. 146): "'Mine hour is not yet come'—the hour of His triumph when His Mother was to take her predestinated place in His Kingdom. In saying that the hour was not yet come, He implied that the hour would come, when He would have to do with her, and she might ask and obtain from Him miracles. Accordingly, St. Augustine thinks that the hour had come, when on the Cross He said, 'Consummatum est,' and after His ceremonial estrangement of some years, He recognised His Mother, and committed to her care the beloved disciple. Thus, by marking out the beginning and the end of the period of exceptions, when she could not exert her influence upon Him, He signifies more clearly, by the contrast, that her presence with Him and her power was to be the rule." It seems to me, however, that the great difficulty in the way of any such exegesis as this is the fact that our Lord *did* grant His Mother's prayer at Cana.

[2] Sermo IX., *De Evangel. Lect. Secund.*

Still, the apparent contradiction undoubtedly exists and calls for an explanation. May it not be found in the fact that our Lord suggested to His Mother that, though His time would not have come had she not asked, yet, since she asked, He would certainly grant her prayer?[2]

---

[1] It should, however, be borne in mind that in every other passage in the New Testament where there is reference to the Hour of Christ (*ἡ ὥρα*, Matt. xxvi. 45, Mark xiv. 41 ; *ἡ ὥρα αὐτοῦ*, John vii. 30, viii. 20, xiii. 1) the reference is to the Passion. This fact makes me surmise that even though at Cana the primary reference of *Mine hour* (*ἡ ὥρα μου*) was to the hour for the manifestation of our Lord's glory by Miracles, there was here also a further mystical reference to His Passion.

[2] This is no more to ascribe a change of mind in our Lord on this occasion than on any other when He listens to the prayer of faith. Theologians tell us that in this matter we have to distinguish between the *antecedent* and the *consequent* Will of God.

I am aware that I have written somewhat differently in the past. Following in the footsteps of St. John Chrysostom[1] and St. Gaudentius,[2] I have quoted the case of the woman of Canaan (whose request our Lord seemed to refuse in order that He might grant it, and thus be enabled to praise the faith exhibited in the face of refusal), and have suggested that in like manner at Cana our Lord would demonstrate His Mother's incomparable Virtue.[3] It may be so. There is no question of disparagement of our Lady. Quite the contrary. What can be more glowing than the words of St. Gaudentius: "Whereupon she too, that most Blessed One, knowing the profound mystery of His answer [its mystical meaning with regard to 'the wine of the Holy Ghost'], understood that the suggestion she had just made was not slighted or spurned, but in accordance with that spiritual reason, was for a time mysteriously delayed. Otherwise, she would never have said to the waiters, 'Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye.' For indeed, full as she was of the Holy Ghost after her Divine Childbearing, she not only knew the meaning of Christ's answer, but also foresaw the whole course of His making the water wine. What would be hidden from the Mother of Wisdom, who was able to contain God, that vessel worthy of so great power?"[1]

---

[1] *In Joannem*, Hom. XXII. 1-2.

[2] Sermo IX., *De Evangel. Lect. Secund.*

[3] *The Mustard Tree*, pp. 311-316.

It may be, then, that for the sake of her higher sanctification, our Lord appeared at first to refuse the request of His Blessed Mother at Cana.

For myself, however, I now seriously more than doubt whether there was any refusal whatsoever, even in appearance.[2] It is certain that the words which our Lord spoke do not of themselves *necessarily* involve refusal. If, for example, they were accompanied by a smile (and who can tell that they were not?) they would be almost playful: "My Mother, why do you ask Me? You know that I can refuse you nothing."

However this may be, our Lady immediately told the waiters to be ready to play their part in the miraculous events which, evidently, she still expected to take place, and thus in effect persevered in her request, as she certainly never would have done, had she understood from the words which Christ had just spoken that to grant her request was not in accordance with the Divine Will.

Having fulfilled her office, the Blessed Mother of God probably retired, without curiosity as to the sequel, to the women's quarters. Our Lord immediately worked the miracle, and commanded that the water, now made wine, should be taken to the *architriclinius*, that is to the Ruler of the Feast—the friend of the bridegroom—whose duty it was to organise the banquets for the male guests, and in this capacity to taste the food and wines before they were placed upon the table. This official found the wine delicious, and having no idea from what source it had come[1]—he had known nothing of the fact that the old supply had run short—sent for the bridegroom. In true Oriental fashion he thought that he would take the opportunity, as an older man—a man of affairs and of the world—to read his friend a little lesson. "It is our custom to give the best wine first. You have kept this excellent wine to the end. Really it was not necessary." The bridegroom was puzzled. He knew nothing of what had actually happened, but "the servants who drew the wine knew."[2] When they were questioned, all was brought to light, the failure of the wine that had been originally provided, the intervention of Mary, the miracle worked by Jesus in answer to her petition. The event was much discussed, and was the first great wonder that led to our Lord being recognised as the Messias whom Israel was expecting.

---

[1] Serm. IX., *De Evangel.*

[2] If it be urged against me that in this I am running counter to great authority, I can reply that I am taking the view which seems, on the whole, to be the more honourable to our Lady. But I have tried to look at the matter without prejudice either way—exegetically.

The miracle.

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of

---

[1] John ii. 9.

[2] *Id.*

Galilee and manifested forth His Glory, and His disciples believed in Him."[1]

Significance of its relation by St. John.

Some sixty years after this miracle St. John, having observed that there was no reference to it in the Synoptic Gospels, gives us his narrative and, having occasion later to refer once more to Cana, writes: "Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where He made the water wine."[2]

The name of Cana, the obscure village in Galilee, should never be allowed to fade away from the memory of Christian men.

The fact that this miracle is recorded in the fourth Gospel (though it was omitted by the Synoptics) is seen to be the more remarkable when we remember that St. John (unlike the other Evangelists, who pay much attention to our Lord's Galilean Ministry) ordinarily passes over what occurred in Galilee, in order to devote himself to the Ministry in Judæa.

We must remember that St. John's Gospel, as he himself tells us, is a *thesis* rather than a *history*.

"Many other signs[3] also Jesus did in the sight of His disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name."[4]

The thesis is contained in the words: "that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." The motive of the thesis is that readers of the book "may believe and have life." The thesis is documented by certain historical facts—miracles worked by our Lord—chosen deliberately out of a great number — a number so large that the Apostle writes hyperbolically that he thinks that "the world would not be able to contain all the books that would have to be written, if they were written every one."

---

[1] John ii. 11.

[2] John iv. 6.

[3] Miracles.

[4] John xx. 30-31.

There was, then, some special reason which led St. John to rescue the miracle worked at Cana in Galilee from the oblivion into which otherwise, together with many other wonderful works of our Lord, it would have fallen. They served their divine purpose at the time. In the providence of God they have not been recorded in the Gospels.

We shall hardly be likely to attribute St. John's selection of the miracle at Cana to its wonderful character in itself. Though of much importance from a philosophical or theological standpoint, the changing of water into wine in a private house, *as a wonder*, is not nearly so striking as, for example, the feeding of five thousand men with a few barley loaves, nor does it seem so marvellous as giving sight to men born blind, or casting out devils, or raising the dead, or many other miracles worked by Christ.

It has been suggested that the Evangelist narrated this miracle because our Lord instituted at Cana the

Sacrament of Matrimony—but there is no proof that this Sacrament was instituted at this time, nor does it seem even likely. The Wedding Feast at Cana was no doubt infinitely honoured by the Presence of the Author of Marriage, but there is no sign in the sacred narrative that the fact of the miracle was recorded in order to honour Holy Matrimony.

Others have thought that the transmutation of water into wine at Cana was set down by St. John in order to prepare men's minds for another and greater transubstantiation, that of wine into the Blood of Christ. No doubt, from the point of view of philosophy, great interest attaches to this change of water into wine; but the likeness to the change in the Eucharist is incomplete, since at Cana, after the miracle, the wine no longer either looked or tasted like water, but now had all the appearances of wine. Besides, there is no hint in the narrative itself that St. John would direct our thoughts to the Blessed Sacrament. After the multiplication of the loaves (which is an exact figure of the multiplication of the divine Food of the Body and Blood of Christ), it is otherwise. In this case St. John by narrating our Lord's discourse on the Living Bread that cometh down from Heaven immediately after he has narrated the miracle—showing indeed how the miracle led to the discourse—himself turns our minds to that which the miracle symbolised. After the account of the changing of the water into wine at Cana, St. John records no speech of Christ, but writes: "After this He went down to Capernaum." The miracle is left to speak for itself. Where this is so, we do well to be on our guard against over-symbolising. When we see the havoc worked by such "Higher Critics" as Strauss, Harnack and Loisy, who deny any historical value to the Fourth Gospel and reduce all its contents to "symbolism" (to say nothing of the even greater extravagances of certain Americans), I think that we should be chary about discovering symbols, however "edifying" they may appear, unless we are sure that they are based on reality. We are on perfectly safe ground when we keep severely to the facts—to that which has been written. Now, when recording the miracle at Cana, St. John contents himself with stating the facts, leaving them to speak for themselves and illustrate their own story. If, then, we are to have any clue to the question as to why the Evangelist selected the set of facts at Cana rather than those which belonged to some unrecorded miracle, we can only hope to do so by examining closely what he has actually written. In this connection it is of importance to bear in mind that throughout St. John's Gospel every fact that is recorded is mentioned in order to illustrate some definite religious truth.

It will therefore be well worth while to read the narrative through carefully, and ask ourselves how we should sum up its contents in a few words, if we were preparing an edition of the Gospel with what is called an "inset." Perhaps at first we should write down: "Jesus works His first miracle, changing water into wine, and His Disciples believe in Him." But we are immediately confronted with the fact that, had the Evangelist wished to preserve the memory of the miracle from this point of view, the reference to the intervention of our Lady would have been entirely superfluous. Leave out verses 3, 4, 5, and the narrative runs quite smoothly. These verses must therefore have been inserted with some definite purpose in view, since nothing is written in the Gospel without a purpose. What then, if we modify our "inset" and write it down in this form as the *motive* of the passage: "Jesus works His first miracle, anticipating His Hour, at the prayer of His Mother"?

This summary at once explains both the reference to our Lady's share in the miracle and the selection of this Galilæan miracle, contrary to St. John's custom, for preservation.

When St. John wrote his Gospel our Lady was dead. The Beloved Disciple's memories of the Blessed Mother, commended to his care by our Lord on the Cross, whom he had taken to "his own," with whom he had lived for many years in close communion, were surely extraordinarily tender.

Is it conceivable that he should have deliberately, with no other purpose in view, written in his Gospel that our Lord refused His Mother, even harshly, when she spoke to him of the trouble that had arisen at the Feast? Yet this is what some people seem to imagine.

> "Did Jesus come to the marriage," asks St. Augustine, "for the purpose of teaching men to treat their mothers with contempt? Did He come to the marriage in order to dishonour His Mother, when marriages are celebrated and wives married with a view to having children, whom God commands to honour their parents?"[1]

St. Augustine does not answer the question directly. It was needless. To ask the question is to answer it. Will it be said that the Evangelist would, obliquely, warn his readers of the danger of undue devotion to Mary? Such an idea is fantastic. At the time when St. John wrote his Gospel, at any rate, no such danger could be apprehended. But what if his object was the exact opposite? If my interpretation of our Lord's words to His Blessed Mother at Cana be correct—if our Lord was understood by His Mother to say: "My Mother, why dost thou intervene? The hour which I had fixed is not yet come. But thou knowest that I cannot refuse thee"—and I have shown that this interpretation is in harmony with the words used by our Lord, and is alone consistent with that which happened immediately after they were spoken—then it follows that by this narrative St. John of set purpose sowed the seed from which has sprung confidence in our Lady's universal intercession. Who shall say that the Apostle, who was given to our Lady to be her son, did not do this, in filial love, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost?

---

[1] *In Joan. Tract.*, viii. 4.

It is well to bear in mind that the Greek phrase *ταύτην ἀρχὴν τῶν σημείων*, translated in our Bible, "This beginning of miracles," is literally: "This beginning of signs." This first miracle of Christ was also the first *sign* not, I think, specifically of any one Sacrament, but of the New Dispensation in general and in particular of the sacramental System as a whole, and of the distribution of the graces that were hereafter to be obtained upon the Cross when His Hour should come—the first *sign* of that mysterious power to be bestowed by our risen Saviour upon His Church, of being the ministerial instrument of our justification, in which our Lady was so powerfully to co-operate by her intercession.[1]

> "At the marriage feast," writes St. Gaudentius, "the Mother of Christ fulfilled her office of pleading with Him on our behalf in our necessities."[2]

At any rate it is certain that trust in the efficacy of Mary's prayer has been intensified in the Catholic Church by the thought of what passed of old at

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 305.

[2] Serm. IX., *De Evangel. Lect. Secund.*

Cana in Galilee when, at His Mother's intervention, Christ anticipated His appointed time for the working of miracles and changed water into wine. It was the same Holy Spirit of God who never fails His Church as she unfolds the true significance of Holy Scripture to her children, that guided the Disciple whom Jesus loved to preserve for all the Christian ages the memory of Mary's prayer at Cana, so wondrously granted by her Divine Son. Our Lord Jesus Christ refuses no favour for which His Mother pleads.

CHAPTER XI

MARY DURING THE PUBLIC MINISTRY OF CHRIST

When from the crowd that voice was raised
  That blessed the Mother of the Lord,
Not her the Son who loved her praised,
  But all who heard and kept His Word.
O answer meet! to her how dear,
  To her too great her crown to boast!
The meek was glad that praise to hear:
  The meekest, loftiest joyed the most.
Above her soul's pure mirror crept
  No mist; no doubt within her stirred:
She asked not, "Who His words hath kept
  Like her, the Mother of the Word?"
Her tender heart rejoiced to think
  That all who say, "Thy Will be mine,"
Without, or with the external link,
  In heart bring forth the Babe divine.

AUBREY DE VERE.

The Public Ministry.

FROM Cana our Lord passed to the exercise of His Public Ministry. By the Public Ministry we understand the three years of Christ's external activity, immediately preceding His Passion, during which He "went about doing good," healing the sick, working miracles of power and compassion, teaching by parables and example, proclaiming the Fatherhood of God, gradually preparing the way for the establishment of His Kingdom upon the earth. In the Public Ministry as such Mary could have no share. The immediate, and therefore in a true sense the primary, purpose of our Lord's Mission in Palestine was to impress upon the Jews that He was the Messias—and not only the Messias, but also the Son of God. To attain this purpose it was necessary that His Mother should remain for a while in the background. Even though the Jews might come to recognise that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messias whom they were expecting, it would be a considerable step further to believe that He was of one Substance with His Father in Heaven. They knew full well that the Messias would be the Son of David; it was no longer a familiar idea that He was also the Lord from Heaven. To this idea Christ would recall His Jewish hearers, when He quoted to them, with a significance that was new to their ears, the well-remembered words of the Prophet-King: "The Lord said unto My Lord: Sit thou down upon my right hand." The Messias was David's Son; He was also David's Lord.

When our Lord Jesus Christ began preaching publicly, gathering disciples around Him, confirming His doctrine by striking and marvellous miracles, claiming authority, all who listened to Him knew where was situated His earthly home, and who were His kinsfolk. He came from Nazareth. He was known to be the Son of Mary, and consequently was reputed to be the Son of her husband, Joseph the carpenter. Our Lord indeed heard Himself addressed as the Son of David, and showed His approbation by a miracle; He spoke of Himself as the Son of Man, by this mode of speech suggesting that, whilst true Man, He was not as other sons of men. Before Caiaphas, at the end, referring to the vision of Daniel, He referred openly to the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven. But during the course of His Public Teaching the great truth that had to be gradually insinuated and driven home was that of His Divine Sonship. The corresponding truth of His Human Sonship needed, amongst the Jews, no emphasis. It was contradicted at the time by none.

Our Lord, therefore, necessarily laid stress upon the fact that, in His Public Ministry, and especially in the working of His Miracles, He depended in no way upon His earthly Mother, but solely upon His Heavenly Father.

This truth seems to have been emphasised on three occasions of which we read in the Gospels. Long before the Public Ministry had begun, our Lord, even as a Child, said to His earthly parents: "Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's Business?" He said to

His Mother at Cana: "Mine hour is not yet come," showing that whilst He would grant her request, still it belonged to Himself alone to determine its hour. Once again, when interrupted in His teaching by the news that His Mother and His brethren wished to speak to Him, He called attention to His relation with His Eternal Father: "They that do the Will *of My Father in Heaven*, they are to Me mother and brother and sister."

It is true that in each case our Lord showed deference to the real, though lower claim of His human Mother, immediately after He had called attention to the higher claim of His Heavenly Father. After the brief foreshadowing of His future Ministry the Eternal Son of God went down from the Temple to Nazareth and was "subject" to Mary and Joseph; at Cana He acceded even by miracle to His Mother's prayer; after His words concerning His Heavenly Father it would seem that, having finished the discourse on which he was engaged, He joined His Mother. "Christ," observes St. John Chrysostom—calling attention to the fact—"went out of the house"[1] to His Blessed Mother. There is no doubt as to the deference rendered by our Lord to His earthly parents, but neither is there any doubt as to the lesson upon which He was careful to insist—that in His public ministry—in doing that work which, in the fulness of time, He had been sent into the world by His Father to accomplish—He must be independent of any earthly ties whatsoever, however dear, intimate, and sacred.

---

[1] *In Matt.*, xii. 47; xiii. 1.

It was a lesson which Mary was quick to learn. Our Blessed Lady, in all things conforming herself to the Mind of her Son, ever rejoiced to be His lowly Handmaid; when it was His Father's Will that He should manifest His Power, she was well pleased to efface herself, as it were, and to stand on one side. We find His Mother by the side of Jesus as a Child, by the side of Jesus as a Youth, by the side of Jesus in the workshop, by the side of Jesus in His sufferings; we do not find His Mother by the side of Jesus when He taught, already as One having authority, in the Temple, when, as the Lord of the powers of nature, He worked His great miracles of healing, giving sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, when He enabled the lame to walk and raised the dead to life, or when He publicly confuted and confounded His enemies. It is true that Mary was with Jesus when He was adored by the Wise Men, and that she was present with her Child when Simeon gave utterance to the *Nunc Dimittis.* But neither the Shepherds, nor the Wise Men, nor Simeon, spread broadcast their own belief that Jesus was the King of Kings and Lord of Lords to whom was due the myrrh, the frankincense and the gold—that it was He who should redeem His people. Our Lord was still in His Childhood, His manifestation was not yet made public. He had not yet begun to preach. Mary was not present at the Transfiguration on Mount Thabor, nor was the Queen of Heaven seen in the streets of Jerusalem on the Festival Day when a great multitude took branches of palm-trees and cried: "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord—the King of Israel." It is true that Mary appeared before the gaze of men on Mount Calvary, but here it was not so much the Godhead as the Manhood, not so much the divine strength which belonged to our Lord, as the human weakness which He had assumed, that was exhibited on the Cross. The Holy Mother of God was as visibly united to her Son in the Economy of His Suffering and humiliation upon this earth, which has passed like a dream, as we know her now to be united to Him in His Majesty in the Heavens which shall abide for ever. If it was fitting for Christ to endure and *thus* to enter into His Glory, so in her measure and degree was it with Mary. Of our Lady, as of us all, it is true that only he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

These considerations supply the key to much that otherwise might surprise us in that which we read of the relations of our Lord to His Blessed Mother during the period of His Public Ministry.

Twice and twice only do we find any reference to our Lady in the Gospels from the hour when she

The references in the Gospels to our Lady during the Public Ministry.

said to her Son: "They have no wine," until she stood beneath the Cross on Calvary. On neither of these occasions do we read of any words that passed directly between our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

Christ was told that His Mother and His Brethren wished to speak to Him; He took the occasion, laying hold upon the words addressed to Him, to turn the thoughts of those who listened to a great spiritual truth. This, we know, was customary with our Lord. To give but two instances out of a number that might be cited, when a crowd followed Him after the multiplication of the loaves, seeking for further food, Christ gently turned them away from the thought of the food of the body that perisheth to the remembrance of the food of the soul that perisheth not. Again, when He was called Good Master, He caught at the word *Good* to insist on the Truth that God alone is essential Goodness.

In like manner, when Christ heard mention of His relations according to the flesh, He seized the opportunity to teach the lesson which He was so anxious to impress upon the minds of all who heard His Word. We should note that St. Matthew does not write that our Lord said: "He that doth the Will of God is My mother and My brother"; but "He that doth the will of My Father in Heaven, he is My brother and My sister and My mother."

This short phrase contains in a condensed form the whole of the following process of thought, which would have been clear to those who were listening to our Lord as He spoke: "You say that My Mother and My Brethren are asking for Me. Think not that no one can be dear to Me, can be bound close to Me, save by the bonds of natural kinship. You too can become dear to Me and be bound to Me. Yes, you too may be to Me brother and sister and mother. For I have not only a human Mother, whom you see on earth, and kinsfolk, but also a Father in Heaven whom you cannot see yet. Mother and children should do the will of the Father who is the Head of all the family and household. If you, then, do the Will of My Father, you shall become the members of My Spiritual Family and Household. You shall be bound to Me and shall belong to Me, as brother and sister and mother."

On another occasion a woman of the people, full of admiration at our Lord's miracles of healing and at the wisdom of the words with which He silenced His adversaries, who blasphemously ascribed those miracles to Beelzebub, cried aloud: "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck." But Christ answered, not directly to this woman, but to all who were present—once more laying hold of the words that had been just spoken: "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it."

I have already given in this book the gist of the patristic comments on this incident.[1] Even Mary, Mother of God, was more blessed in hearing and keeping the Word of God in her soul, than in bearing the Word of God in her body. This is the blessedness to which our Lord would draw the attention of His hearers, that they too might learn to hear the Word of God and keep it.

Assuredly, no man can say that there is anything in either of these admonitions of Christ that is derogatory to our Lady and to the honour which is her due, unless he is prepared to go so far as, like some ancient heretics, to deny that Mary is the true Mother of Jesus, or to forget that His Mother was Blessed by God beyond all other creatures in that she "kept the words of Christ and pondered them in her heart."

There is nothing, then, that can fairly be urged from either of these two passages in the Gospels against Catholic devotion to our Lady; on the other hand it can hardly be argued that they support that devotion directly. In their primary significance, at least from the point of view of devotion to our Lady, it seems to me that taken by themselves they are purely negative, proving nothing either one way or the other. It is true, no doubt, that from the Words of Christ we may quite legitimately deduce the Blessedness of Mary, by laying those Words alongside of others—for example the Salutation of the Angel at the Annunciation and the greeting of Elisabeth to our Lady at the Visitation. (Moreover such a method of collation of one passage of Holy Scripture with others is involved in the exhortation not to read unintelligently, but "to search," that is to look carefully into the Scriptures.) But apart from the setting of the Faith in which Catholics rightly place them—as they were first heard by Jews who knew nothing of the Mysteries of the Incarnation, they could not have been understood *then* to carry with them any special reference to the supreme Blessedness of Mary as the Immaculate Mother of God. They simply conveyed at the time a lesson useful not only to the Jews to whom they were first addressed, but also to Christians to the end of time—the lesson of the blessedness of hearing and keeping the Word of God, in order thus to learn and to do the Will of Him who is our Father in Heaven.

---

[1] Pp. 66-71.

The hour had not yet come for our Lord publicly to glorify His Mother. Her public glorification would follow upon His own, when the Church throughout the world should confess and proclaim Him to be the Eternal God. Meanwhile, both for Jesus and for Mary it was still the hour of humiliation. The world was not yet redeemed, nor the Son glorified with the glory He had before the world was made. Those, therefore, who may look to find in the Gospels words of our Lord directly eulogising the Blessed Virgin, or expressly emphasising her incomparable dignity, or in general affording explicit support for Catholic devotion to Mary, will necessarily be disappointed, not understanding the appointed times and seasons. Moreover, to search for anything of the kind is to betray ignorance as to the purpose for which the Gospels were written, whilst to be troubled because it is not there would be to evince misconception as to the function of the Church in the exposition of the Faith.

Functions of the Church in the Exposition of Revealed Truth.

To the Church alone—to the Church built by Christ upon a Rock, guaranteed by Him the assistance of His Spirit to the end of time, promised victory over the gates of Hell, declared by His great Apostle to be the Pillar and Ground of the Truth—it belongs in every age to guard the Christian Revelation from corruption, and to declare the contents of that Revelation authoritatively to mankind. The four Gospels contain no Creed, no formal statement, that is, of Christian doctrine in a connected form. The knowledge of the Christian doctrine is presupposed in the Christians for whom the Gospels were written; it had already been conveyed to them by word of mouth by the authorised teachers who had initiated them in the Mysteries of the Faith. St. John wrote his Gospel with the definite end of establishing the Godhead of Christ against the first heretics; the

And of the Gospels.

purpose of the Synoptic Evangelists was not (save incidentally) to teach doctrine at all, but to chronicle the history of leading events in the Life of the Divine Master who already, after His Death and Resurrection, before He left the earth, had commissioned His Church to teach all nations in His Name, vested with His own authority. Amongst the words spoken on earth by our Lord and recorded in the Gospels, those stand out prominently which show us the methods by which He gradually proved to men of good will, by parable, rebuke, exhortation and suggestion, more often than by direct statement, the central truth of His Mission from the Father. Ordinarily, our Lord would lead men on step by step. When faith was openly accorded Him, He gave praise unstintingly, and promised magnificent reward. "O woman, great is thy faith, be it done unto thee as thou wilt."[1] "I have not found so great faith, not even in Israel."[2] "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, thou believest. Greater things than these shalt thou see."[3] "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in Heaven. And I say unto thee that thou art Peter."[4] But Christ never asked for the fulness of faith, until the fulness of time had come, after the necessary preparation of mind and will.

---

[1] Matt. xv. 28.

[2] Luke vii. 9.

[3] John i. 50.

[4] Matt. vvi. 17.

When the woman from the crowd cried aloud "Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps that gave thee suck," I think it probable that, according to the Eastern custom which, when it would praise a man, often praises him indirectly by praising all those who belong to him, especially father and mother and near relations, her intention was primarily to praise the great Teacher Himself: "Blessed art Thou, and consequently blessed is Thy Mother." Blessedness is ascribed here to the Mother of our Lord in a periphrasis, *Blessed is the womb that bare Thee,* in marked contrast with the direct address of the Angel: "Hail Mary, blessed art *thou* amongst women," and of Elisabeth: "Blessed art *thou* that hast believed."[1]

However this may be, who can doubt that, had the poor woman's faith been perfect,[2] had she, for example, said categorically: "Blessed is Thy Mother, for Thou art the Lord my God, and she is the Mother of God," our Lord would have said to her too, "O woman, great is thy faith, thou shalt see greater things than these, blessed art thou too, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father who is in Heaven." But for this the time was not ripe. To have declared openly the Blessedness of His Immaculate Mother because she was His Mother, and therefore the Mother of God, in the presence of the scornful and malicious Pharisees, who had just ascribed His Miracles to the Prince of Evil Spirits, would have been to cast pearls before swine. Who, then, need wonder that the Everlasting Wisdom chose rather at that moment to dwell on the general lesson, always opportune, of the blessedness of all who hear the word of God and keep it.

---

[1] *Cf.* "The Trend of a Text," *Dublin Review*, July, 1919.

[2] All those who read the Breviary are aware that the Venerable Bede thinks that the woman in the Gospel already believed in the Incarnation. With all the respect that is due to our great English Doctor of the Church, it seems to me difficult to follow him here.

In a touching poem addressed to "*All the Angels and Saints*," George Herbert writes as follows:

. . . "I would addresse
My vows to thee most gladly, Blessed Maid,
And Mother of my God, in my distresse.
Thou art the holy mine, whence came the gold,
The great restorative for all decay
In young and old;
Thou art the cabinet where the Jewel lay.
Chiefly to thee would I my soul unfold.
But now (alas!) I dare not, for our King
Whom we do all jointly adore and praise
Bids no such thing."[1]

It is pathetic to see a devout soul held back by such a scruple from the loving intercourse with the Blessed Virgin which was familiar to all Christendom before the blight of the sixteenth-century change of religion. George Herbert tells his readers that

---

[1] *George Herbert's Poems*, p. 74. (Edition of 1850. Messrs. Pickering.)

("alas!") he did not "dare" to pray to our Lady because her Son "bid no such thing"—as recorded, that is, in the Gospels. One asks oneself in wonderment: Did he never reflect that neither is it recorded in the Gospels that Christ bade us to pray to Himself or to the Holy Ghost? Of prayer to Christ after the Ascension, there is but one instance in the whole of the New Testament, the prayer of Stephen: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Of prayer to the Holy Ghost there is no instance whatsoever. George Herbert doubtless prayed much and constantly to the Holy Spirit and to our Lord Jesus Christ. If authority had been demanded of him for thus acting, notwithstanding the fact that Christ in the Gospel "bids no such thing," he would, I imagine, have answered that, since he believed that our Lord is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God with the Father and the Son in the Unity of the Godhead, it is right to pray to each Divine Person separately, and that the Church had thus acted from the beginning. This is the method of logical inference from established truths to their consequences, perfectly legitimate and safe, when sanctioned by an authority that is believed to be from God. But a precisely similar method of argument justifies prayer to the Blessed Virgin, though it is no more directly commanded in the Gospels than is prayer to Christ our Lord. Catholics believe that our Lady is the Mother of God, and therefore to her do we "our soul unfold." In this we rely upon the sanction and approbation of the Church which we know to possess divine authority, and which teaches her children to believe in the Communion of Saints, and also that "it is good and useful to invoke the Saints reigning together with Christ." Therefore without fear, confidently do we seek the aid of all the Saints and Angels, and "chiefly" that of their Queen.[1]

Though George Herbert did not realise how the matter lay, his dread of praying to our Lady, according to the promptings of his heart, arose not from the fact that our Lord does not explicitly "bid" such prayer—so far, at least, as has been recorded in the Gospels—but from the other fact that "alas!" he did not believe in the authority of the Catholic Church. The prejudices of his upbringing were too strong. He was held captive by a narrow insularity in religion. Had it been otherwise, he would have realised that the Lord who, as we read in the Gospel, bids us "hear" His Church, implicitly bids us hear that Church when she encourages us to invoke His Blessed Mother.[2]

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 293.

[2] Of course, if the Church we are commanded to hear be the post-Reformation Church of England, that changes the issue, but what other force excepting ingrained prejudice can have led such a man as George Herbert to accept the negations of a national Church in opposition to the positive, world-wide teaching of Catholicism through all the centuries?

Another pious Anglican poet did not share the scruples of George Herbert. What George Herbert "dared not" do, John Keble in a beautiful poem called "*Mother out of Sight*"[1] declared that all his readers might safely do "unblamed" and "unforbidden."

"Saw ye the bright-eyed stately child
With sunny locks so soft and wild,
How in a moment round the room
His keen eye glanced, then into gloom
Returned, as they who suffer wrong
When most assured they look and long?
Heard ye the quick appeal, half in dim fear,
In anger half: 'My Mother is not here'?

"Perchance some burthen'd heart was nigh,
To echo back that yearning cry
In deeper chords than may be known
To the dull outward ear alone.
What if our English air be stirred
With sighs from saintly bosoms heard,
Or penitents to leaning angels dear,
'Our own, our only Mother is not here'?

* * * * *

"Lightly they soothe the fair, fond boy,
Nor is there not a hope and joy
For spirits that half-orphan'd roam
Forlorn in their far island home,

---

[1] This poem, dated *In Conceptione B.V.M.*, 1844, was written for *Lyra Innocentium.* It was, however, omitted when the book was published, lest it might give offence. It was given to the world for the first time in Coleridge's *Life of Keble*, and has been inserted in an Appendix by Dr. Lock in his edition of the *Lyra*.

Oft as, in penance lowly bowed,
Prayer—like a gentle evening cloud—
Enfolds them, through the mist they seem to trace,
By shadowy gleams, a Royal Mother's face.

* * * * *

"How but in love on thine own days,
Thou blissful one upon thee gaze!
Nay, every day, each suppliant hour,
Whene'er we kneel in aisle or bower,
Thy glories we may greet unblamed,
Nor shun the lay by seraphs framed,
'Hail, Mary, full of grace!' O welcome sweet
Which daily in all lands all saints repeat.

* * * * *

"Therefore, as kneeling day by day,
We to our Father duteous pray,
So unforbidden we may speak
An Ave to Christ's Mother meek
(As children with 'good morrow' come
To elders in some happy home).
Inviting so the saintly host above
With our unworthiness to pray in love."

How sadly it sounds, as we think of the "half-orphan'd" whose Mother is "out of sight," how touching are the words betraying the instinctive yearnings of a gentle and loving spirit. How unspeakably grateful to God Catholics should be that they are lifted by their Faith above the mists of Anglican timidities. It is due to the clear teaching of the Faith that they have no need

"through the mist to seem to trace,
By shadowy gleams, a Royal Mother's face."

For Catholics who practise their religion "our one, our only Mother," is never a Mother in the Shadow—never a "Mother out of Sight."

Catholic doctrine and Holy Scripture.

The Catholic Church teaches that the Divine Revelation which she received from on high has been handed down in two main channels—Holy Scripture and Apostolic Tradition, whether written or oral.[1] Anxiously and nervously to search in every case for categorical affirmation of Catholic Doctrine, or of practices based upon that Doctrine, in the pages of Scripture or in the scanty writings of the early Fathers, would be to betray a want of confidence in the authority of the living Tradition of the Church. None the less it is true that almost every dogma of Revelation may be found, at least in principle and germ, in the pages of the inspired Scriptures. Such is most certainly the case with regard to all that our Faith teaches us concerning the Holy Mother of God. On the first page of Holy Scripture her advent is proclaimed, as that of the Woman of promise who should wage incessant warfare against the Evil one, winning the victory where our first mother had been overcome. Of God's Mother the prophets have prophesied; in her David exulted as the Queen in her beauty, and the Ark which is the dwelling-place of the Lord; the glories of her virginity, of her Maternity, of her faith, were proclaimed by the

---

[1] *Conc. Vatic. Sess.*, III., cap. ii. (*Cf.* 2 Thess. ii. 14).

Angel messenger and by the Holy Ghost; the unborn Baptist exulted at the sound of her voice; at her prayer the first miracle was worked by her Son; she stood beneath His Cross, her soul transfixed with the sword of sorrow, intimately united with His Passion; upon His Mother our Lord bestowed His first smile at Bethlehem; His last care upon the earth was for His Mother on Calvary; she was seen in vision by the Apostle, to whose filial care she had been committed by her dying Son, as a Wonder in Heaven itself, symbolising the struggles and the triumph of the Church over the powers of Hell. All this, and much more than this, is to be found in the Holy Scriptures of our religion. And even during the Public Ministry of her Son, when Mary was, in the Counsels of God, withdrawn for the moment from public view, one was found, a poor woman, otherwise obscure, unknown, who—speaking perhaps more wisely than she knew—became, together with Gabriel and with Elisabeth, the type of the Church of God in proclaiming the ineffable Blessedness of His glorious Mother. The words of that brave woman of the people now made precise by the affirmations of the Faith, are on the lips of every priest and religious who day by day after the recitation of the Divine Office is taught by the Church humbly to repeat the familiar sentences:

> Blessed be the Womb of Mary the Virgin that bore the Eternal
> Father's Son,
> And blessed be the paps that gave suck to Christ the Lord.

CHAPTER XII

MARY'S WORDS

Show me thy face, dear Mother, and let thy voice resound in mine ears, for thy words are sweet, and thy countenance is beautiful.—SAVONAROLA.

THE Gospels have preserved words spoken by our Blessed Lady on four occasions—the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Finding in the Temple, and the Marriage Feast at Cana.

The words in which the Mother of God saluted St. Elisabeth, which were the occasion of the unborn Baptist leaping for joy within his mother's womb, have not been recorded. We have given to us but five short sentences, and the *Magnificat*. If out of the *Magnificat* we take two sentences, of which the first expresses our Lady's relation towards God, and the second declares what should be the attitude of all the future ages towards herself, we have seven sayings or Words of Mary.

1. How shall this be done, because I know not man?

2. Behold the Handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy Word.

3. My soul doth magnify the Lord.

4. Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed.

5. Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.

6. They have no wine.

7. Whatsoever He saith unto you, do ye.

It may be observed that the first five of these Words are to be found in St. Luke's Gospel—sometimes called the Gospel of the Infancy—which contains so much that the Evangelist can only have learned from our Lady herself, whilst the last two have been recorded by St. John, who, according to tradition, was present on the occasion when they were spoken.

It is but little as regards bulk; yet we shall find that these Words of Mary contain in themselves all the principles which constitute Christian perfection. They include Mary's petition to her Son at Cana, and a great prophecy uttered by the Queen of Prophets that is fulfilled before our eyes, and will be fulfilled—we doubt not—to the end of time.

Our Lady's Silence.

Before considering our Blessed Lady's Words, let me call the attention of my readers to her silence on three occasions—a silence far more admirable than could have been any words. In the Temple when Christ asked: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's Business?" we read that Mary made no reply, but pondered His question in her heart. At Cana, when again Christ asked a question, His Mother knew that His question called for no direct answer from her lips. On the Cross, when Jesus said to His Mother, pointing to His Disciple: "Behold thy son," once more—and this seems to me singularly touching—she spoke no word, simply bowing to the Will of God and allowing that disciple to take her "to his own."

> "Our dear Lady St. Mary," so we read in the *Ancren Riwle*,[1] "who ought to be an example to all women, was of so little speech that we do not read anywhere in Holy Writ that she spake more than four times [on four occasions]. But in compensation for her seldom speaking her words were weighty and had much force. Her first words that we read of were when she answered the angel Gabriel; and they were so powerful that as soon as she said, 'Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy Word,' at this word, the Son of God and very God became Man, and the Lord, whom the whole world could not contain, enclosed Himself within the womb of the Maiden Mary. Her next words were spoken when she came and saluted Elisabeth, her kinswoman. And what power, thinkest thou, was manifested in these words? What? That a child, which was St. John, began to leap in his mother's womb when they were

---

[1] Written in the thirteenth century.

> spoken. The third time that she spoke was at the wedding; and there, through her prayer, water was changed into wine. The fourth time was when she had missed her Son and afterwards found Him, And how great a miracle followed these words! That God Almighty bowed Himself to a man—to a carpenter—and to a woman and followed them, as subject to them, whithersoever they would!"[1]

We will now consider our Lady's Words separately.

1. *How shall this be done unto me, because I know not man?*

Our Lady's question to the Angel.

When first the Angel saluted our Lady, "she was troubled at his saying: 'Hail thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee,' and thought within herself what manner of salutation this might be." An ancient writer whose works are to be found amongst those of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus represents her as saying within herself:

> "Will this word Hail prove a trouble to me, as of old the fair promise of being made like to God proved to our first mother Eve, proved to the serpent who was the Devil? Has the Devil, who is the author of all evil, once again become transformed into an Angel of light? And the Angel said to her: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call

---

[1] *Ancren Riwle*, p. 77 (Camden Society's Edition). (*Cf. Our Lady's Dowry*, pp. 74, 75.)

> His Name Jesus.' Then only was it that the Sacred Virgin said: 'Whence shall this be unto me, for I know not man?' She was a Virgin, her virginity consecrated to God. How, then, should she be a Mother too?"[1]

St. John Chrysostom writes as follows:

> "Truly admirable was the Virgin, and Luke shows forth her virtue, saying that when she heard the Salutation, instead of allowing herself to be carried away, or falling into an ecstasy and at once receiving what was said, she was troubled, asking what manner of salutation this might be."[2]

However, both St. Augustine and St. Ambrose seem anxious for fear lest anyone might (in consequence of these words "How shall this be?") impute lack of faith to the Holy Mother of God. They contrast them with the words of Zachary to the Angel: "Whereby shall I know this; for I am an old man and advanced in years." St. Ambrose writes:

> "Unless thou payest diligent attention it might seem to thee [as Calvin dared centuries afterwards to assert] that Mary did not believe."

The same holy doctor proceeds to point out that:

> "Whereas Zachary was made dumb in punishment for his unbelief, Mary was exalted by the coming down upon her of the Holy Ghost . . . in saying: 'How shall this be done?' she doubted not of the effect, but only enquired as to the mode of

---

[1] Hom. II. *De Annuntiat. inter opp. S. Greg. Thaumat.*

[2] *In Matt.*, Hom. IV., 4.

that effect. . . . 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' The incredible and unheard-of manner of becoming a mother must be first heard in order to be believed. That a virgin should give birth is a sign not of a human, but of a Divine mystery, as indeed had been foretold by Isaias: 'Take to thee a sign, Behold, a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son.' Mary had read this. Consequently she believed that it would be done. But *how* it should be done, she had not read, for the manner of its doing had not been revealed even to so great a prophet. The mystery of so great a mandate was in truth not to be uttered by the tongue of any man, but by an Angel. And to-day it is heard for the first time: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee. . . .' It is evident then that Mary in saying 'How shall this be, because I know not man?' had no doubt as to the fact, but enquired as to the manner of the fact. Indeed, it is plain that she believed that it was to be done, from her asking how it should be done. Hence she merited to hear: 'Blessed art thou that didst believe.' Yea, verily blessed was she, surpassing the priest as she did, for whereas the priest denied, the Virgin corrected the error. It is no wonder that the Lord, when about to redeem the world, began His work with Mary; so that she, by whom salvation was being prepared for all, might be the first to receive the fruit of salvation as a pledge."[1]

And St. Augustine:

"Zachary did not believe. In what manner did he not believe? He enquired of the Angel how he might know what was being promised him, since he was himself an old man and his wife advanced in years. And the Angel said unto him: 'Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time.' The same Angel came to Mary to announce to her that Christ would be born of her in the flesh. And her words are very similar, for she too asks the cause, saying to the Angel: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' While Zachary said: 'Whereby shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years,' to the latter it is said: 'Thou shalt be dumb, because thou believest not'; to the former the cause is explained and no silence is imposed. On her saying: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' the Angel answers: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Most High shall overshadow thee.' . . . Why is this? If we attend to the words only, either both believed or both doubted. But whilst we can hear words, God can search into hearts also.

---

[1] St. Ambrose, *Exposit. in Lucam.*, *in loco.*

"We should, indeed, understand that Zachary in saying: 'Whereby shall I know this, for I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years?' spoke as one who had given up all hope, and not with a view to enquire, whereas Mary, on the contrary, in saying: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man?' spoke to make enquiry, and not giving up hope. Whilst she asked the question, she doubted not the promise.

"O truly full of grace! For thus she was saluted by the Angel: *Ave, gratia plena.* Who can explain this grace? For this grace who is sufficient to

> render thanks? . . . But see what Holy Mary says herself, full of faith, full of grace, about to become Mother, ever to remain a Virgin. What does she say amongst other things, of which to speak in particular would be over-much. What does she say? 'He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away.'"[1]

Titus Bostrensis, a Bishop of Bostra in Phœnicia in the fourth century, sums the matter up thus:

> "Mary, the most Holy Virgin Mother of God, asks this question: How shall this be, because I know not man? not as though she were incredulous, but as one wise and prudent, who desires to learn the way and manner of what was declared to her. For neither had anything of the kind ever happened before that a Virgin should conceive or would ever happen again."[2]

This first Word, then, of the Holy Mother of God is the expression of her virginal delicacy of conscience and strenuous determination to preserve the virginity which she had consecrated to Heaven. For all time it sets a lesson to those who are called upon, in some sudden emergency, to speak under difficult circumstances. In our Lady's question to the Angel we see a wise anxiety to avoid undue precipitancy, and to be sure of her ground, combined with an unshaken trust in the power and promises of God. The

---

[1] Sermo CCXC., *In Nativ. Joan. Baptist.*, iv. 3.

[2] Hom., *In Deip. Annuntiat.*, P.G., Tom. LXXXV., pp. 779-783.

Blessed Virgin was sure that all would be done even as the divine messenger had announced; she asked only how it could be accomplished consistently with the virginity that she felt bound to safeguard. As soon as her question was answered, the second Word fell from Mary's lips:

2. *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy Word.*

Ecce Ancilla Domini.

When our Lady said aloud: *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord,* she showed the perfect dispositions of her soul. For this is the perfect attitude of the creature—in all things to be the servant of the Creator. With our Lady it was no mere profession, no mere manner of speech. Her one desire was to serve her Lord with absolute devotion.

"Sicut oculi ancillæ in manibus dominæ suæ ita oculi Mariæ ad Dominum Deum nostrum donec misereatur nostri."[1]

The longing of our Lady's heart was to be as a humble handmaiden—that her Sovereign Master's pleasure should be done in all things—as by God's Angels in His Heaven, so by the Angels' Queen on earth. To this she gave expression: "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy Word."

---

[1] As the eyes of a handmaiden are on the hands of her mistress, so are the eyes of Mary upon the Lord our God, until He turn and have mercy upon us. *Cf.* Ps. cxxii. 3.

> "See here Mary's humility; see her devotion," writes St. Ambrose. "She calls herself the Handmaid of the Lord—she who is chosen to be His Mother, and is not elated by the unexpected promise. Moreover, in calling herself *handmaid*, she claims not for herself the privilege of so great a grace, but the privilege of doing only what she is bidden. For since she is to give birth to Him who is meek and humble, she herself also was bound to choose humility. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy Word.* This betokens service, and in it you may see the fixed purpose of the will. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord.* This implies preparation for duty. *Be it done unto me according to Thy Word.* This shows the resolute purpose formed in the will."[1]

Be it done unto me according to Thy Word.

Fiat mihi secundum Verbum Tuum.

By His divine FIAT in the beginning God created the universe out of nothing; so now by her human FIAT, in entire conformity with God's Will, Mary co-operated in the New Creation, which should repair the sin of our first parents and redeem the world. For, at the sound of her voice, the Holy Ghost came upon her, and the Power of the Most High overshadowed her, and the Holy One became her Child. This is the new creation—the Incarnation of God the Son. And the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us.

It has been observed that, as in the Latin version of Mary's act of complete surrender to the Divine Will, which brought God down from Heaven, there are but five words—*Fiat mihi secundum Verbum Tuum*—so, in the Latin Liturgy, there are but five words at the Consecration of the Body of Christ—*Hoc est enim Corpus Meum*—most sacred words by which the Lord God, clothed in the Humanity he assumed of Mary, is once more present in our midst. And in truth not only the Mystery of Calvary but also the Mystery of Bethlehem is shown forth in the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, where we commemorate not only the Death[1] but also the Birth of Mary's Son.

---

[1] St. Ambrose, *In Lucam in loco.*

As we draw near to the divine Banquet what better preparation in our hearts than silently to repeat the words of Mary: "Behold the servant of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy Word."

3. *My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

Magnificat anima mea Dominum.

The Venerable Bede having shown how the words of Elisabeth when Mary visited her house were in themselves a manifest proof that she had been wondrously filled with the Holy Ghost, proceeds as follows:

> "But if such was the light which shone in the mind of the mother of the Precursor, who can tell, who can conjecture the greatness of the grace which filled the Blessed Mother of God? Let us listen to her words, if perchance by means of them we may

---

[1] *Cf.* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

in some slight degree discover what passed within her soul.

"When, then, she heard the answer of Elisabeth, who called her Blessed among women, named her the Mother of her Lord, praised her faith, and showed how she herself and her son had been filled with the Holy Ghost at the voice of her salutation, Mary no longer could keep silence on the gifts which she had received. As beseemed her maiden modesty, she had hitherto kept silence about the celestial oracle, and venerated in her own heart the hidden Mystery of God. She awaited reverently the moment when it should please Him, who is the Dispenser of gifts, to manifest what special gift He had bestowed upon her, what special secret He had revealed to her. But now that she finds that the Holy Spirit has made known to others what graces He had given her, she opens the heavenly treasure which her heart contained.

"*My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*

"In this canticle Mary first acknowledges the gifts specially conferred on herself, and then enumerates the general benefits which God never ceases to bestow upon the human race.

"A soul magnifies the Lord which dedicates to the praise and service of God all its affections, and proves its sense of the Divine Majesty by the observance of God's precepts. A spirit exults in God its Saviour which takes no thought of earthly pleasures, and is neither softened by prosperity nor crushed by adversity, but which delights only in the remembrance of its Creator, from whom it looks for eternal salvation. But though these words are adapted to all the perfect, yet they could be uttered

> by none so fitly as by the Blessed Mother of God, who, by a special privilege, was both inflamed by a spiritual love of God, and rejoiced in having conceived Him corporeally. Above all other Saints she possessed the right to rejoice in her Jesus, that is in her Saviour, since she knew that He would derive His temporal birth from her—He who was to be the Eternal Saviour of the world, and who in one and the same Person was her Son and her Lord.
>
> "In the words that follow she teaches us how meanly she thought of herself, and that all her Merits were due to Divine Grace. *Because He hath regarded the humility of His Handmaid*, for behold, from henceforth :
>
> "4. *All generations shall call me Blessed.*
>
> "She shows that she is indeed in her own judgment the humble servant of Christ, but at the same time declares that she has been suddenly raised by heavenly grace and glorified in so high a degree, that her eminent Blessedness shall be rightly the wonder and the praise of all the nations."[1]

Thus wrote the Father of English history from his Saxon Monastery in St. Cuthbert's patrimony—reminding his English readers that the Blessedness of Mary was the wonder and praise not only of England but even of all [Christian] nations.

Centuries before his time, St. Ephrem in Syria had given the same testimony.

> "Come let us call Mary Blessed, the poor little Virgin whom the King's Son hath enriched. Great

---

[1] Ven. Beda, Hom. XL.

is her Blessedness, and her memorial manifold, and her praises all people multiply. Mary said: *All generations shall call me Blessed*, on account of Him to whom I have given birth. And I too, in turn, will call her Blessed, because she has herself invited me. And to her, O ye wise, must the debt be paid. . . . Blessed art thou, Mother most blest, because all generations with loud voice call thee entirely Blessed on account of the Infant born of thee. The islands, the tribes, all peoples proclaim thee Blessed. Blessed art thou, chaste Virgin, for with thee and in thee dwells heavenly Beatitude."[1]

And in another hymn:

"The Memorial of Mary to all generations.

"1. The Blessed Virgin heard the Angel's Salutation. . . .

"2. Blessed art thou, Mary, because in thee dwelt the Holy Ghost. . . .

"3. Blessed art thou, Mary, because the Bush seen by Moses figured thee forth. Blessed art thou, Mary, who wast to thy Babe as though the Veil wherewith Moses covered the splendour of his face. . . .

"4. Blessed art thou, Mary, because all the Prophets in their books depicted thee. . . .

"5. Blessed art thou, Mary, because in thy Virginity thou art called the new Mother. . . .

"6. Blessed art thou, Mary, because thou wert made the most glorious Mother of the King of Kings. From thee sprung that Fruit, desired and glorious, which is full of all virtues. Blessed art thou—yea

---

[1] *Hymns on the Birth of Christ in the Flesh* (Sec. VIII., *Hymns*, Lamy, Vol. II., pp. 429-510), Hymns 8 and 9.

> wide fame hath thy Blessedness in cities and congregations—because thou gavest birth to Christ, the Saviour of the world, who by His grace has saved His creatures."[1]

If in the time of Bede, and even in that of Ephrem, our Lady's Prophecy had already been gloriously fulfilled "in the islands, by the tribes and by all peoples, in the cities and congregations," how much more wonderfully in our day and generation. Each age, as it has passed, has added to the recognition of her incomparable Blessedness, and now wherever Christianity is known, in all tongues, the wide world over, by old and young, by priests and people, by monks in their cloisters, by virgins rapt in prayer, by the soldier on the battlefield and by the labourer tilling the field, the Maid of Nazareth is acclaimed blessed beyond all women, blessed in her faith, blessed in her joys, blessed in her sorrows, blessed in her Virginity, blessed in her Motherhood, blessed in her silence, blessed in her words blessed at Bethlehem and at Nazareth, blessed on Calvary, thrice-blessed in the unveiled Presence of her Son. In the common speech of Christian men, she is the Blessed One, Blessed Mary, our Blessed Lady, the Blessed Virgin, the Blessed Mother of God. All generations in truth have agreed to call her blessed, as all generations yet unborn shall proclaim her Blessedness. And Mary gives us the reason:

---

[1] *Id.*, Hymn 16.

> "For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and Holy is His Name. And His Mercy is from generation to generation unto them that fear Him. He hath showed might with His Arm. He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat. He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His Mercy. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever."

All these are our Blessed Lady's beautiful words. They seem a forecast of that which one day should be written by the great Apostle of the Gentiles: "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen that He may confound the strong. And the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible hath God chosen, and things that are not, that He may bring to nought the things that are. That no flesh should glory in His sight."[1]

Mary never gloried in her own merits in the sight of God. On this account hath He chosen her from among all women, and hath raised her from her lowly estate, that He might, through her, work His divine purposes of Mercy and Compassion for the children of men, confounding those that are wise in their own conceits, filling the hungry with good things, sending the powerful empty away. On this account shall all generations call her Blessed, for he that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted—so that he that was first shall be last, and he that was last shall be first. The humble Virgin, whom the proud ones of this earth accounted as though she were not, is throned to-day above the Cherubim and the Seraphim and all the Hosts of highest Heaven, as the glorious Mother of their Lord.

---

[1] 1 Cor. i. 27-29.

Our Lady's question to her Son.

5. *Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing.*

St. John Chrysostom writes that the Blessed Virgin calls St. Joseph the father of Jesus to avoid the suspicions that might otherwise have been aroused.

> "For observe what this Virgin says even to her Son: Behold Thy father and I have been seeking Thee. For, had there been any suspicion here, He would not have been held to be really even the Son of David. . . . If even Joseph himself, a man so just and admirable, needed many arguments to bring himself to accept what took place: for example the assurance of the Angel, the vision during sleep and the testimony of the Prophets, how would the Jews, who were hostile to our Lord, have entertained such a notion?"[1]

---

[1] *In Matt.*, Hom. III.

This explanation, however, if I may venture to say so, seems hardly necessary. Although no doubt our Lady had to be most careful to preserve her great secret—which was not hers so much as God's—still, after all, St. Joseph had played a father's part. He had a father's duties, as he possessed a father's authority over the Son of God. He has therefore a right to a father's name.

Origen draws a moral lesson from these words of Mary:

> "In the company of the many my Jesus cannot be found. Learn where those who seek may find Him, that thou too, seeking with Joseph and Mary, mayest find Him. . . . Not without purpose is it written: Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. He who seeks Jesus must not seek Him negligently, nor indolently, nor as though in passing, as some seek and so cannot find Him. . . . Sorrowing they sought for the Son of God. . . . Where do they find Him? In the Temple. For there the Son of God is found. Wouldest thou too seek the Son of God, seek first in the Temple; haste thither. There wilt thou find Christ, the Word and Wisdom, that is, the Son of God."[1]

We have already meditated on the Word of Mary: *Son, why hast Thou done so to us?*" when contemplating the Second Dolour. I would only add here that it finds its analogue in Christ's own cry of desolation from the Cross: "My God, My God, why hast Thou abandoned Me?" We must always remember that our Lord was substantially One Being—of One Nature with His Father, whereas the relation between Mary and her Son though an identity of Nature, was that of two distinct Beings—the one human, the other Divine; we must also remember that the Agony of the Incarnate Word of God was on altogether a different plane from the sorrow of any creature—still, whilst bearing these truths steadily in mind, it remains true that the dispositions of our Lord's Soul were reflected, so far as such reflection was possible, in His Mother's heart. In these two mysteries, then, however disparate in themselves—the mystery of the cry of Mary in the Temple of Jerusalem and the mystery of the cry of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary—we learn of the cloud of darkness which was permitted by God for a short while to obscure the Face of the Beloved, or rather to hide from the wearied imagination His intimate Presence. In both these mysteries we are taught that, provided the surrender to the Divine Will be absolute, such loving plaint, far from being displeasing to God, is actually well-pleasing in His Sight. In each case the answer soon was to be granted to the heart-broken appeal, to which in neither case could an immediate response be audible, for the trial was not yet finished. The Dereliction on the Cross lingered awhile, but in a moment it had passed for ever, as the Son yielded His Soul into His Father's Hands. Mary was to lay up difficult words of mystery in her aching heart, before her sob of pain could give place to joy and all be made clear to her vision, but soon Jesus was with her once again, and the wound inflicted by her three days' Loss received its balm and healing during many years in the fields of peaceful Nazareth.

---

[1] Hom. XVIII. et XIX., *In Luc.*

Thus would our Lady teach us that we need never fear to ask our difficult questions, if only we do so in reverent spirit, and be not impatient for the answer, that shall be given one day, but only when it is well for us—in God's appointed manner and in His chosen time.

6. *They have no wine.*

Our Lady's prayer at Cana.

When our Blessed Lady spoke thus, she was for the first time (at least in public) exercising her office of Advocate with her Son. As we listen to Mary's petition, we understand that our Blessed Mother, ever full of sympathy and kindness, is ready not only to plead for us in our spiritual needs which relate to eternity, but even in the passing anxieties of the moment that concern our everyday welfare. We are thus encouraged to seek her help in every emergency, knowing that she will never fail us, if only we will trust her always.

"And the wine failing, the Mother of Jesus saith to Him: *They have no wine.*"

This word of Mary is a pattern for us of that perfect prayer which shall never be disappointed—

simple, full of confidence, preparing for the answer that was to come, though the answer could only come by miracle. When our wine faileth, may the Mother of Jesus, who prayed of old for those at Cana, pray for us too in our hour of need, and once again shall the water of our discontent be changed by God into the wine of His holy Love.

7. *Whatsoever He shall say to you, that do ye.*

Our Lady's precept.

If our Lady's Word at the Annunciation, "Be it done unto me according to Thy Word," expresses, in a sentence, the attitude which befits a soul in presence of her God, so this last Word which Mary spoke to the servants at the Feast contains in itself a complete summary of all Christian Perfection. What further can be said by any Novice-Master to his novices yet unversed in the spiritual life, what further by a director of souls training a contemplative nun in the ways of highest sanctity, what further by any Christian teacher to those committed to his care, than is contained in these words of our Lady to her servants: "Whatsoever my Son shall say to you, that do ye"? If any man will fasten this exhortation of Mary in some place where it may often be visible to his eyes, so that he may keep it always before his mind—and will then strive to make it the rule of his life, he will need no other teaching. If he will but follow it faithfully, he will walk ever in the ways of security, for he will be walking in the ways that all the Saints have trod. This should be our main endeavour, wherever our lot be cast—in the camp or in the field, in a monastery or in the midst of divers activities—to strive to do the Will of Christ, listening to His Voice, as He on earth heard the Voice and did the Will of His Father in Heaven. "As," He said, "My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me," even so should it be our supreme delight to strive to do His Will, who has redeemed us to Himself. This is the command that Mary once gave to the Jewish waiters—which she now gives to all who hail her as Queen and Mother.

To be the servants and children of so great a Lady is indeed an unspeakable privilege, but privileges bring duties in their train. Our duty it is to listen to Mary's Word—and Mary sends us to her Son.

We may, if we will but bend our ears to listen, hear the Voice of Christ our Lord on every side speaking to our souls through the teaching of His Church, through the maxims of His Gospel, through the admonitions of our appointed Superiors, through the duties of our state in life, through the dispositions in our regard of God's Providence, through the inspirations of His Holy Spirit to our consciences. Wherever we may hear that Voice, our Lady warns us to do that which we are bidden, as the condition of safety and the pledge of our bliss. "*Whatever He shall say to you, that do ye.*"

With good reason, then, does the Venerable Bede close the Homily, from which I have already quoted at considerable length, with these words:

> "By the grace of God, if we always keep in mind the acts and words of Blessed Mary, we shall always persevere in the observance of the works of a pure and virtuous life. It is a most excellent and useful custom that has grown up in the Holy Church, that Mary's hymn is sung by all daily at Vespers. Thus the minds of the faithful are stirred by a more frequent memory of our Lord's Incarnation to a greater devotion and are confirmed in solid virtue by the frequent thought of the example of His Mother."

CHAPTER XIII

MARY'S DEATH AND GLORIOUS ASSUMPTION

Mother of Christ, and all men's Mother,
Where thou sittest the stars between,
Pluck His Robe for His toiling brother,
Stricken with sin.

Yea, the strong desire of His Passion ;
Yea, the fruit of His mortal pain—
Intercede for thy mournful nation,
Mother of men,

Intercede for thy mournful nation,
Toiling, stricken, seething beneath—
Yea, the strong desire of His Passion,
Bought with His Death.

KATHARINE TYNAN.

IN the early ages of Christianity we find a certain disinclination to believe that Mary had really died. Death, as we know it, is the punishment of sin, and Mary had not sinned. St. Epiphanius, arguing against heretics who denied our Lady's perpetual Virginity, observed that we read nowhere in Holy Scripture of Mary's death, and that, since he refused to deny to the Mother of God any privilege that had ever been granted to any Saint, he thought that it well might be that, like Elias, she had not died.[1] This feeling was strengthened by another opinion that was also common, that death had not been allowed to overtake the beloved Disciple of whom Jesus had said to Peter: "If I will that this man stay, what is it to thee?"

Certainty of our Lady's death.

It is, however, now held amongst Catholics to be certain that both our Lady and St. John really died, as Elias must one day die. The words of the Gospel: "But Jesus did not say to him that he should not die,"[2] ought to have obviated the misunderstanding with regard to the Apostle; and in our Lady's death there was no dishonour. It is not the sleep of death—the temporary separation of soul from body—that is incompatible with sinlessness—for such a separation was permitted even in the case of Christ—but the corruption of the constituent elements of the body, which in sinners follows death. This corruption was impossible, as is evident, in the case either of Christ or of His Mother. Still both Jesus and Mary really died.

Theologians are accustomed to assign three reasons which made the death of Mary seemly, if not absolutely necessary.

1. As Bossuet has written in one of his famous sermons on the Assumption:

---

[1] *Hær.*, lxxix. 5.

[2] John xxi. 23.

> "Nature and grace are in accord as to the necessity of death for all. To die is to pay the debt to nature which every mortal owes.[1] Nor has grace exempted any from this necessity. On this account, when the Son of God determined to destroy death itself, He laid down the law that to escape death all must pass through death's hands, that to be born anew all must enter the tomb, and that to be stripped of mortality all must die once. Therefore, this solemn Feast [of the Assumption] must have its beginning in the death of the Holy Virgin. It is a necessary part of the triumph of our Queen that she should leave in the hands of death—even in his bosom—all that she had of mortality."[2]

2. It is a general principle that in all things, where possible, our Lady was conformed to the Image of her Son. Had our Lord exempted His Mother from the law of death, He would have deprived her of a point of likeness to Himself, which surely she cherished dearly. As, then, Jesus died, Mary would also die. In her death, as in her life, she was made like to her Son, surrendering herself to the Will of God, committing her soul into her Father's Hands.

3. It is well for us that our sinless Mother should have died. Her death gives her a new claim to protect us when we come to die. She teaches us not to fear death, if with her we may learn to love

---

[1] Every *mortal* owes this debt in virtue of natural generation from Adam. The Immortal, whose Human Birth was supernatural, could not be included in the Universal Law.

[2] Second Sermon on the Assumption.

Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose Death is our only hope for Life Eternal. "Holy Mary," we may say to her, "thou who didst die once, pray for us who have still to die." The thought of Mary's death gives us courage and devotion—it infuses a new element of confidence in the most familiar of all our petitions to Heaven's Queen: "Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death, Amen."

Maria, Mater Gratiæ,
dulcis Parens Clementiæ,
tu nos ab hoste protege,
et hora mortis suscipe.

The cause of our Lady's death.

Mary died, but the question remains to be answered: What was the cause of her death? There is no hint in Scripture or Tradition that the Queen of Martyrs died a violent death. The sword was to pierce the soul, not the body, of the Mother of God. But how could dissolution come from within? The seeds of death are sown in disease of the body, decay of the vital tissues; but disease and decay are the consequence of sin. Unlike death, which is extrinsic, they are intrinsic, and bring disorder in their train. Therefore neither disease nor decay could touch the flesh of the Immaculate Virgin, from which had been fashioned the very Flesh of Christ. It follows that our Lady died of love—of the Love of God. There is love even between men which is so strong that it has been rightly said that some have died of a broken heart. How often do we not read that an aged husband has died almost immediately after the death of his wife. One could not survive the other. We need not, therefore, be surprised when our Theologians and spiritual writers assure us that our Lady's grief beneath the Cross was so great, as she saw her Son die before her eyes, and her desire to be in His unveiled Presence so intense after His Ascension, that she was preserved in life by a continuous miracle of God's Power, until the time was ripe in the Divine Wisdom for her departure hence. Day by day the Virgin Mother cried with the Apostle: "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is far better," for she was consumed with a love beyond the power of even the great Apostle to conceive—with a love beyond the love of angels or of any other creature. At length there came the glad hour of her release, and her pure soul winged its flight to God her Lord and Son.

Let me quote Bossuet again on this subject. In his first sermon on the Assumption he speaks most beautifully on the power of love, especially of the love of desire for the "mystery of unity after which all souls sigh in their exile, as they weep by the waters of Babylon when they remember Sion—a mystery of unity which grows day by day until it is consummated in that Peace which is God Himself." In his second sermon on the same Feast we find these words:

"If you will believe what I say, you will not exercise your minds, searching for any other cause of Mary's death. Her love was so ardent, so strong, so burning, that it did not cause her to draw one single breath which ought not to have broken all the bonds of her mortal body; it did not form in her one regret which ought not to have troubled all the harmony of her being; it did not send her one desire for heaven which ought not to have drawn with it Mary's soul. Oh, Christians, I have said to you that Mary's death is miraculous, now I change my mode of speech. I prefer to say that it was not her death which was the miracle. Rather her death caused the miracle to cease. The continual miracle was this, that Mary could live, separated from her well-beloved. But shall I be able to explain to you how it was that this miracle ended, and how it came to pass that at last Love slew its victim? Was it some desire more inflamed than the rest, some movement more vigorous, some transport of love more violent that released her soul? If I may be allowed to express my thought, I attribute the Holy Virgin's death not to any impulses other than those which were habitual to her, but rather only to the perfection of her love. . . . As the lightest shake of the bough will suffice to set free the fruit which is already ripe, as the flame will rise of itself and fly towards its centre—even so the Virgin Mother of God died through an impulse of divine love and her soul was borne to Heaven on a cloud of holy longings. This it was which made the angels cry aloud: 'Quæ est ista, quæ ascendit, sicut virgula fumi, ex aromatibus myrrhæ et thuris?'"[1]

---

[1] Cant. III. 6.

Our Lady's Assumption.

It is of Faith that at the moment of death there comes for us all the Judgment, and that immediately after the Judgment the soul which is in the state of grace — should there be no need of further purification arising in some way from the sins of its life—possesses the unveiled Sight of God. In Mary's case there could be no delay arising from any sin committed in this life. It is, therefore, of Faith that immediately after death her soul possessed the joy of Heaven, which is the Beatific Vision.

The Church believes that in the case of the Holy Mother of God, the bodily resurrection of all the just has been anticipated, and that she is in Heaven both in body and soul. This is what Catholics mean when they speak of our Lady's Assumption.

I have written already that it is evident that corruption of Mary's Body would have been impossible. I meant that it is evident to those who hold the Catholic Faith. The feeling of Catholics on this subject was well expressed by a writer, of unknown name, whose works are to be found amongst those of St. Augustine:

> "That the most sacred body, from which Christ assumed flesh . . . was given over to worms, since I am unable to think it, I shudder to say it (*quia sentire non valeo, dicere perhorresco*). To suppose that the flesh of Mary was subject to the common lot of corruption and of turning to the dust through the action of worms, is outside the possibilities of

> thought. The privilege of her incomprehensible grace banishes such a thought to a far distance."[1]

If any Catholic could allow himself to think—as surely no Catholic has ever thought during the whole course of the Church's history—that our Lord would allow such dishonour to be done to His Mother—to that flesh which in a true sense is His own[2]—he would be stayed by the remembrance of Mary's "incomprehensible grace." Mary's sinlessness "banishes such a thought to a far distance." The incorruption of Mary's body after death is the necessary complement of her Immaculate Conception.

> "If Eve, the beautiful daughter of God," writes Cardinal Newman, "never would have become dust and ashes unless she had sinned, shall we not say that Mary, having never sinned, retained the grace which Eve, by sinning, lost? What had Mary done to forfeit the privilege given to our first parents in the beginning? Was her comeliness to be turned into corruption, and her fine gold to become dim, without reason assigned?"[3]

The Second Adam and the Second Eve accepted all those consequences of the Fall of our first parents—even its penalties—which involved nothing intrinsically unbecoming to the Incarnate God and His Holy Mother—but such consequences only. For example, Jesus and Mary were hungry, often they were weary, they were sad—they died. But concupiscence and corruption of Their sinless Flesh could not come nigh Them.

---

[1] *De Assumpt. B.V.M. int. op. S. Augustini, P.L.*, Tom. VI., p. 1140.

[2] The author whom I have just quoted uses the phrase, *Caro Christi caro Mariæ.*

[3] *Meditations and Devotions*, pp. 93, 94.

Our Lady's ancestors did not share her privileges.

I have often heard people who are not Catholics object that, if Catholics were logical, they would, consistently with their principles, attribute Immaculate Conception of soul, and incorruptibility of body, not only to our Lady, but also to our Lady's own mother and indeed to all her ancestors. But surely thus to argue is strangely to misconstrue the situation. *Mary is not on a level with her Son.* He is the Creator, she is His creature. That which is necessary for the honour of the Creator need in no wise be necessary for the honour even of the noblest of creatures. "*For the honour of her Son,*" we, with Augustine, "would not speak of sin" where the Mother of God is concerned; it does not follow that *for the honour of Mary* we would not speak of sin where her own mother is concerned. Anyone who should maintain that, because God preserved His Mother from seeing corruption—the appointed fate of sinful flesh—it follows that Mary could similarly preserve her mother's flesh, is in effect making Mary equal to God—a blasphemy most horrible. Exceptional graces bestowed upon the Mother of Jesus need not be bestowed upon the mother of Mary. Catholics, it is true, venerate and pay great honour to the holy parents of our Lady, but Joachim lived with his wife as other husbands live, and Anne was as other mothers in her childbearing. The virginal childbearing of Mary stands alone, not only in itself, but in all its implications. The relations of Mary to her Maker are without parallel in creation. From Mary's privileges it is impossible to argue justly to any other case, since all those privileges were conferred upon His Mother for the honour of her Son. The mother of Mary of Nazareth has no title to exemptions from the common lot of Adam's children which were bestowed solely upon the one and only Mother who was chosen to give human birth not (as Anne gave birth) to a sinless creature, but to the All-Holy God.

Our Lady's body might conceivably have remained incorrupt in the tomb,

I suppose that, speculatively speaking, there would have been nothing absolutely repugnant in the idea of the body of the Holy Mother of God awaiting the Resurrection of all the Just in a state of incorruption, separate from her soul, until the final Day of Account.

The Adorable Body of Christ Himself remained in the sepulchre, temporarily untenanted by His Soul, from the time that It was placed there by Joseph of Arimathea until the first Easter morning. There can be nothing absolutely repugnant in that, which certainly befell the Body of

Christ for part of three days, continuing even for long centuries. Still, the state of separation of the soul from the body which it was created to inhabit is necessarily abnormal, and though our Lord endured it for a time, St. Peter says that it was impossible for him "to be holden by it." Moreover, the Ascension of His Body was made in some way the condition of His giving gifts to men. Had, therefore, our Lady's body, like the bodies of the Saints, been allowed to rest on earth, the object of the veneration of Christians, we should, when making pilgrimages to her shrine, have felt a surprise which we never feel when venerating the shrines of the Apostles. For what seems quite natural in the case of St. Peter and St. Paul would have seemed strange indeed in the case of the immaculate Mother of God. However, all such theoretical speculations as to what might have been are purely academic, for we know that in fact it was not so. God did not leave the body of His Holy Mother after her death for any length of time upon the earth. Of this we are assured by the world-wide belief of the Faithful, supported by the approval of the Church; also by the fact that never at any period has there been a suggestion that any Relics of the body of Mary were to be found in any part of the world.

Catholics believe without hesitation that the Holy Mother of God is, body and soul, in Heaven with her Divine Son in Glory unimaginable. Eastern schismatics are as clear in their minds as are Catholics with regard to this truth. Moreover, it is practically taught by the Church. We can learn the Church's faith from her liturgical prayers. From very early times the Feast of the Assumption has been celebrated throughout the Catholic world.[1] In all the ancient Sacramentaries the triumph of the Virgin-Mother over death and corruption is celebrated in glowing terms. Her "passage" is spoken of in all of them as a hidden thing, without parallel amongst men. Mary died indeed, but only for a time. Her virginal body was superior to the dissolution of the tomb. The hands of death were unable to hold in their embrace the immaculate flesh of her who was at once a Virgin and a Mother, nor could any rock enclose that Mother, whose Childbearing had been without pain. The "secret" prayer for the Mass of the Feast in the Gregorian Missal is the same as we use at the present day: "May, O Lord, the prayer of the Mother of God come to the aid of Thy people; for although we know that, in accordance with the law of flesh, she has passed hence, yet are

but her bodily Assumption shortly after her death is certain.

---

[1] By order of the Emperor Maurice, in the sixth century this Feast was transferred from January 18 to August 15, on which date it was observed in Rome under St. Gregory the Great (Nicephorus, L. XVII., c. 28). It was known as the *Pausatio*, *Dormitio* (ἀνακοίμησις), *Transitus* (μετάστασις), or *Assumptio*, terms used as synonymous.

we sensible that in heavenly glory she is interceding for us with Thee." Here we have a testimony to the ancient tradition of the Roman Church, of which the great Apostle of the English was ever a most faithful guardian. A learned writer in the *Dublin Review* comments on this prayer as follows:

> "Here it is plainly intimated [at least it is implied] that the Blessed Virgin really died; and that notwithstanding her death, she is certainly now in the Glory of Heaven, interceding for us with God, both in body and soul. Any interpretation short of this, that is, our Lady's integral Assumption to Heaven, would give a sense to the prayer, unmeaning and irrelevant. For it would be superfluous that the Church should express so emphatically her belief—as though of something more than ordinary—that the Blessed Virgin, though deceased, is in soul in Heaven, there interceding for us, whilst her body still remains on earth, since this is common to all the Blessed alike."[1]

Few things are more striking in the early centuries than the eager desire, sometimes leading to unedifying disputes, of local churches to obtain the Relics of the Saints. Tradition is clear as to where repose the bodies of all the Apostles excepting St. John.[2] Very significant is the story of the revelation made to St. Ambrose as to the burial-place of St. Gervasius and St. Protasius, of the "translation" of their bodies made the third day after their discovery, at which St. Augustine and St. Paulinus were present, and of the numerous miracles which increased extraordinarily the devotion of the Christian people.[1] We know how St. Augustine caused portions of these Relics to be removed to Hippo, his Cathedral city, and how further miracles rewarded his faith. It is, then, simply incredible that had it been believed that our Lady's Body was perhaps upon the earth, no effort should have been made in early ages to find out where it lay, in order that it might be venerated by the Church together with the Relics of Apostles, Virgins, and Martyrs, of whom Mary is the Queen.

---

[1] *Dublin Review*, October, 1870. *The Assumption of the B.V.M. an Apostolical Tradition*, p. 408.

[2] We have the tradition of the tomb of St. John, but only of his tomb, at Ephesus.

Were any Christian to doubt the corporal Assumption of the Holy Mother of God, we would ask him: Where does he imagine that our Lady's glorious body is at this moment? He will hardly dare to assert that it has been corrupted, but if it were still upon the earth, the fidelity of the Faithful would beyond any doubt have guarded it with even more jealous care than that which has watched over the Relics of Peter and Paul and Andrew and Mark and countless servants of God. Mary's body is not upon the earth—then it can only be, as Catholics rejoice to know, in Heaven above.

---

[1] *Cf.* St. Ambrose, *Ep. XXII. Ad Marcell. Soror.* St. Augustine, *De Civit. Dei*, xxii., 8; *Confes.*, x., 7, Serm. 76, 94, 286 319, 320. St. Gaudent, Serm. 17, etc.

"I beheld a great wonder in Heaven," wrote the beloved Apostle after Mary's death, "a woman clothed with the sun, crowned with a crown of twelve stars, with the moon"—that is the world—"beneath her feet."[1]

Mary is crowned in Heaven—Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son, Spouse of the Holy Ghost—she is the Queen of the Heavenly City. His Son has promised to all His servants: "Where the Master is, there shall the servant be." But Mary is not only His servant, she gave her Lord His Human Life. His Mother is nearer her Child than all the rest of His Court.

The Gospel read on the Feast of the Assumption.

It has often been asked why the Church has appointed to be read as the Gospel in the Mass of the Assumption the passage in which St. Luke tells us the story of the solicitude of Martha and the devotion of her sister Mary as "she sat at Jesus' feet and heard His Word." It begins: "A certain woman named Martha received Him into her house;" it ends: "Mary hath chosen the better part which shall not be taken from her."[2] We are told that the active life is here denoted by Martha, and the contemplative life by her sister Mary, and that the Church would remind us that both are united perfectly in the person of the Blessed Virgin, who ministered to our Lord with Martha, and with Mary sat at His Feet, hearing His Word—thus receiving, in its fulness, on the day of her Assumption that better part which shall never be taken from her. No doubt this is absolutely true. Still I cannot help hazarding the suggestion that there is something else which we may do well to ponder. If Martha received the Lord into her house, so did, and far more wondrously, the Blessed Virgin. The Feast of the Assumption commemorates the receiving by our Lord of the Blessed Virgin into *His* House. Our Lady is in Heaven now, but we do well to remember that once, like us, she was upon this earth. The Feast of Mary's Assumption is the Festival of her home-coming; for this reason it was so full of triumph—because she once gave a home to Jesus Christ her Lord, who has in return prepared for her the home which is hers for ever. If, with Martha and her sister Mary, and with the Blessed Mother of God, we will but welcome Him into our poor house, then one day He will welcome us to His Father's House, where there are many mansions, and there will be room even for us. We can, then, wait with faith and confidence, knowing that He has already welcomed to their home the souls of Martha and of her sister Mary, and of all those who have acknowledged Him on earth. Above all has He welcomed His most faithful Mother—her immaculate soul reunited to her body—for, in her case at least, His Love would brook no delay, but came leaping over the hills, skipping over the valleys, that He might meet and glorify the Mother who is so near to His Heart. Her glory had been joined to His own by the Psalmist of old: "Arise, O Lord, into Thy Resting Place, Thou and the Ark which Thou hast sanctified."[1] Such is the Mystery that we contemplate with joy and gladness as year by year we celebrate in the Church of God Mary's glorious Assumption by her Son.

---

[1] Apoc. xii. 1. See pp. 384-388.

[2] Luke x. 38-42. This gospel, with the addition of Luke xi. 27, 28, is read in the Eastern Liturgy on the Feasts of our Lady's Nativity and Presentation, as well as on that of her Assumption, and in the Mozarabic Liturgy (with the same addition) on the Feast of the Assumption.

Does the privilege of bodily Assumption belong to our Lady alone?

A question remains, to which no answer can be given with certainty. Was our Lady alone in the privilege of corporeal Assumption before the general Resurrection, or did she share it with others? The Faith teaches us—so here there can be no question amongst Catholics—that the Immaculate Conception was a unique grace bestowed upon our Lady only. But we are nowhere taught by our religion that no Saint is present bodily in Heaven, excepting the Blessed Virgin. To me it seems likely (though we cannot know for certain) that this privilege was shared by St. Joseph, St. John the Evangelist, and the Saints of whom it is recorded by St. Matthew that they were raised to life and appeared in Jerusalem after the Resurrection.[1] It was the general opinion of antiquity that these holy patriarchs did not return to Limbo, but were taken up bodily into Heaven by our Lord at His Ascension.[2] With regard to St. Joseph and St. John, they are the only great Saints of the New Testament in whose case, as in that of our Lady, there never has been any tradition as to their bodily Relics. It was very commonly believed in ancient times that St. John was body and soul in Heaven.[3] Very possibly St. Joseph was amongst the Saints who appeared in the Holy City after the Resurrection; in any event—quite apart from the fact that his Relics do not exist, which, as we have seen, is in itself most significant—it would be hard to believe that a privilege, if bestowed upon others, would not have been granted by our Lord to His own Foster-Father, the Spouse of His Blessed Mother.

---

[1] Psalm cxxxi. 8.

Traditions concerning the circumstances of our Lady's death.

I have already referred to the testimony of St. John Damascene with regard to the traditions concerning the presence of the Apostles at the death of our Lady.[4] Some two centuries before St. John Damascene wrote, St. Gregory of Tours gave the following account of what was in his day generally believed on the subject:

---

[1] Matt. xxviii. 52, 53.

[2] St. Jerome, *Comment in Loc.;* St. Augustine, *Ep.*, 164 (al. 99); St. Epiphanius, L., iv. 12; Eusebius, *Demonst. Evangel.;* Origen, *Cont. Cels.*, II., 16. *Cf.* Suarez, LIII., Art. iii.

[3] St. Ambrose, *In Ps.*, cxviii., cap. xx., n. 11. St. Augustine, *In Joan. Tr.*, cxxiv. ci. 3. Serm., 253, c. 3, 4. St. Gregory of Tours, *De Miraculis,* Lib. I.

[4] *Cf.* p. 21.

> "After the wonderful glory of our Lord's Ascension had stirred up the minds of the Faithful to contemplate the things of heaven, the holy Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, being gathered together with His Blessed Mother Mary into one house, had all things in common. Nor did anyone call anything his own, but (as we learn from the sacred writer of the Acts of the Apostles) each one possessed all things in charity. The Apostles afterwards were scattered abroad through different countries to preach the Word of God. When at length the Blessed Mary had fulfilled the course of this present life and was now to be called out of the world, all the Apostles were gathered together from their several regions to her house. And as they learned that she was to be taken from the world, together they watched with her. When behold the Lord Jesus came with His Angels, and receiving her soul committed it to the care of Michael the Archangel and departed. At daybreak the Apostles lifted her body with the couch, laid it in the sepulchre and watched by it, awaiting the coming of the Lord. And lo! the Lord stood by them once more, and commanded the holy body to be taken up and borne on a cloud to Paradise; where now united to the soul, and rejoicing together with the elect, it enjoys the good things of eternity which shall never come to an end."[1]

Catholics will feel differently with respect to these and similar traditions, concerning our Lady's death, the incidents of which are to be found in the writings of antiquity—such as that St. Thomas arrived after the other Apostles and received special proof of the wonder, that her body was raised on the third day after death—to liken her in this also to her Lord—that beautiful flowers were to be found growing miraculously where the holy body of Mary had rested, and the like. They may be purely legendary and symbolic, they may conceivably be true. About this there is no kind of certainty. But as regards the essential truth, we can use with confidence the words employed by Bossuet concerning the Immaculate Conception, in his day not yet defined—"Short of the certainty given by a Definition of the Church, no higher certainty can be imagined." This certainty is ours. Catholics believe that the immaculate body of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, far from lying in the darkness of any tomb, is glorious and resplendent amidst the splendours and the light of the Heaven where her Son is seated in His regal Majesty—clothed with the Humanity that was fashioned not out of nothing, but from the flesh and blood of a human Mother.

---

[1] *De Mirac.*, i. 4.

CHAPTER XIV

MARY OUR ADVOCATE

"Eia, ergo, Advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte."

The Communion of Saints.

THE heresy which denies that the Saints, after the passage of their souls to God which we call death—even after their attainment of the Beatific Vision—are unable to intercede for wayfarers upon earth, from which it follows that it is useless to invoke their aid, was first broached in the fourth century. Its champion was a certain Vigilantius, who was combated by St. Jerome. The clause: "I believe in the Communion of Saints" was—it is all but certain—introduced at this time into the Baptismal Creed, in order expressly to assert the opposite truth. Soon the false doctrine of Vigilantius died out amongst Christians, until in the sixteenth century it was resuscitated by the Protestant innovators of Germany. It was to condemn such denials that the Council of Trent taught authoritatively: "It is good and useful to invoke the Saints, reigning together with Christ."

All Catholics are well aware of the vital truth of Christianity—belonging to the very basis of their faith—that our Lord Jesus Christ is, in a unique sense, our Advocate with God. Through Jesus Christ alone can we have access to God the Father, for Jesus Christ alone has, in virtue of His Death, broken down the wall of partition that had been built, as the consequence of sin, between God and man.

The Mediation of Christ.

"If any man sin," writes St. John, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just, and He is the Propitiation for our sins."[1] We see here that the Mediation of our Lord is hardly distinguishable from His sacrifice of Himself. He is revealed to us in the same sentence as "our Advocate with the Father" and as the "Propitiation for our sins."

St. Augustine, writing of the Martyrs, emphasises this truth:

> "The justice of the martyrs is perfect, because by their very passion were they made perfect. For this reason prayer is not offered for them in the Church. For the other Faithful departed we pray —for the Martyrs we do not pray, since they departed so perfect as not to be our clients, but our advocates. Yet this not in themselves, but in Him to whom they cleaved as perfect members to the Head. For He is in truth the One Advocate, sitting at the Father's right hand. But He is the One

---

[1] 1 John ii. 1.

> Advocate as He is also the One Pastor. . . . Though Christ was Pastor, was not Peter also a pastor?"[1]

Our Lord is the One Pastor; yet to Peter He said: "Feed My Sheep." Though He is the One Pastor, yet many pastors share the office, which in the supreme sense is incommunicable. Similarly, He is the One Advocate; yet this is far from forbidding that we have many advocates, as we have many pastors. Christians are called upon even on earth to be the advocates of their fellows in prayer to God. "I desire," wrote the Apostle, "that prayers . . . be made for all men, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, because there is One God and One Mediator of God and man, the Man Christ Jesus."[2] *Because* we have the Divine Mediator who is also Man, through whom we can intercede, we should mediate with much confidence for one another, since God wills us thus to mediate by prayer. It is "good and acceptable" in His Sight. Were it not for the One Mediator through whom we pray, we might pray in vain.

The Mediation of the Saints.

It is clear from the writings of St. Paul that he himself attached much importance to the intercession—in other words to the mediation—of his friends and disciples on his behalf. To the Romans he wrote: "I beseech you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers for me to God;"[1] and to the Ephesians: "By all prayer and supplication, praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the Saints [that is, in our modern phraseology, "for all the Faithful"], and for me that I may open my mouth with confidence, to make known the Mystery of the Gospel,"[2] whilst to the Thessalonians he was content to write simply: "Brethren, pray for us."[3]

---

[1] Serm. CCLXXXV. 5.

[2] 1 Tim. ii. 1-5.

Throughout the Holy Scripture we can see the principle of intercessory prayer in operation and may observe the value that has been consistently attached by the Sacred Writers to the prayers of the Saints.

"But Moses besought the Lord his God, saying: Why, O Lord, is Thine Indignation enkindled against Thy people, whom Thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, with great power and with a mighty Hand. . . . Remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob Thy Servants."[4]

"And the people of Israel said to Samuel: Cease not to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us out of the hands of the Philistines."[5]

"And the Lord said to Eliphaz the Themanite:

---

[1] Rom. xv. 30. [2] Eph. xvi. 18, 19. [3] 1 Thess. v. 25.
[4] Exodus xxxii. 11, 13. [5] 1 Kings vii. 8.

My Wrath is kindled against thee. . . . Go to My servant Job . . . and My servant Job shall pray for you. His face will I accept. . . . And the Lord accepted the face of Job. The Lord also was turned at the penance of Job, when he prayed for his friends."[1]

"Elias was a man subject to like passions with us, and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much."[2]

These last words of St. James should be observed carefully. Intercessory prayer avails in proportion to the "justice"—that is to the holiness—of him who prays.[3] It is not the prayer of every man which, like the prayer of Elias, will avail first to close the Heavens and then to bring down rain in abundance. Elias was heard because of his "justice"—because he was a friend of God.

Now we may come to our Lady.

"And who is just," asks St. Bernard, "if Mary be not just, from whom has risen the Sun of Justice?"[4]

If St. Paul attached such value to the prayers of his disciples in Rome, at Ephesus, at Thessalonica; if Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were heard by God—and Job and Elias—how much more certainly shall not Mary's prayers be heard? Mary is not only, like all the Saints, our Lord's servant; she is also His Mother. It is this great fact which places in a category apart the mediation of the Mother of God. The prayer of a Mother must differ in its nature from the prayer of all beside. Mary, Joseph, Peter, Paul, John the Beloved, the Baptist—all the Saints say to Christ: "My Lord and my God!" Mary alone can say to Him: "My Lord and my Child!"

---

[1] Job xlii. 7-10.

[2] James v. 17, 18, 19.

[3] Δικαιοσύνη, translated *iustitia* in the Vulgate, carries with it the implication of the possession of all virtues.

[4] *De Aquæductu*, v. *Cf. De Domo Divinæ Sapientiæ*, iii.

The Mediation of Mary.

The confidence of Catholics in our Lady's intercession, when analysed, is found to rest on the twin certainties which have already occupied our thoughts. Mary is both Mother of God and mother of us all. Catholics know on the one hand that God will never refuse the prayer of His holy Mother; on the other hand they are convinced that she will never turn a deaf ear to the cry of her children upon earth.

I

God will not refuse His Mother's prayer.

Our Lady's office as Mother of Christ.

People who object to Catholic devotion to the Blessed Virgin are sometimes heard to urge that when God became Man He merely made use of a physical vehicle in Mary, assuming that which was necessary for

His purpose, and then dissociating Himself from what was hardly an active agent—little more than a mechanical "instrument." Nothing can be further removed from the truth. Our Lord's relations with His glorious Mother are relations with a living person, whom He freely chose from all women to co-operate with His high designs, whom He fashioned and sanctified for His divine purposes, who was gifted by Him with endowments of nature and grace, to fit her (so far as a human creature could be fitted) for an incomparable dignity and for an intimacy with Himself that differs not merely in degree but also in kind from that which has been granted to any other child of Adam.

It is true that the maternal authority, which it was Mary's awful duty to exercise over her Son in the days of His Childhood and Youth, has passed away for ever. Still "the calling and gifts of God are without repentance."[1] Our Lady remained, and always will remain, the true Mother of the Man Christ Jesus. She was as truly His Mother on Calvary as at Bethlehem; she is as truly His Mother now in the unveiled Presence of the Godhead as in the days of His earthly condescension. Jesus does not deny His Mother's supplications in His Father's House.

The omnipotence of prayer is a great reality.

---

[1] Rom. xi. 29.

"Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you, for he that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth and unto him that knocketh it shall be opened."[1] Such are the gracious promises of Christ. How comes it then that many ask and receive not, seek without finding and knock without the door being opened? St. James gives us the answer when he writes: "You have not because you ask not. You ask and receive not because you ask amiss."[2]

The omnipotence of prayer made rightly.

Our spiritual poverty arises from one of two causes —either we pray not at all, or when we do pray we pray amiss.

Human imperfections.

(*a*) The prayers of men too often fail through want of faith and confidence in God.

"If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall obtain anything of the Lord."[3]

(*b*) Or, we fail through lack of perseverance. There are some graces which our Lord will certainly grant if we continue in prayer, but it is not His Will to grant them immediately—the delay is for our own sakes, that we may have the opportunity of acquiring merit in His Sight. Christ has told us that we should imitate the widow who wearied out the unjust judge by her importunity; He seemed to refuse the petition of the Syro-Phenician woman, that to her He might be able to say: "Woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee as thou wilt."

---

[1] Matt. vii. 7.
[2] James iv. 25.
[3] *Id.*, i. 5, 7.

(*c*) Again, sometimes our prayers are vitiated through our sins and imperfections. The poor sinner who cries to God with a broken and a humbled heart for mercy and forgiveness shall always be heard the very moment that he turns that contrite heart to his Father in Heaven. But too often we are hardly contrite, and know full well that God who reads us through and through must see within our souls much that is displeasing to His Infinite Sanctity. "You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss, that you may consume it on your concupiscence."[1] It is possible to pray for temporal goods, which, were they to be granted, would be spent on things that are evil, or at least would minister to the concupiscences which assail us—to "the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, which is not of the Father, but is of the world."[2]

If our poor prayers are to have their part in that omnipotence which belongs to perfect prayer, we must pray aright—our hearts must be full of faith and confidence and the love of God, we must pray perseveringly in the face of seeming discouragement, we must ask what is according to the Will of God. "And this is the confidence which we have towards the Son of God, that whatsoever we shall ask *according to His Will*, He heareth us."[1] Above all we have to be careful whilst we pray, that our eye be single and our hands be clean.

---

[1] James iv. 3.

[2] I John ii. 16

Perfection of our Lady's dispositions in the prayer of petition.

Wise then are those who, sadly conscious of their miseries, place their petitions in the safe keeping of our Blessed Lady. Never were faith, confidence, or love found to be lacking in the immaculate soul of Mary. Never will Mary tie the hands of God by doubting of His faithfulness to His Promises. Never can His Mother pray save in submission to the Will of her Son made known to her in the intimate recesses of her being, for she shares all the secrets of His Heart. Never shall ought displeasing to His Eyes be seen in the spotless Virgin's hands. "My Beloved," it has been written, "feedeth amongst the lilies."[2] Whiter surely than the whitest lilies are the hands of Mary, ever sweet with their fragrance. "As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters."[3] Well, then, may St. Bernard exclaim: "Let us seek for grace, and let us seek it through Mary, for that which she seeks she finds, nor can she be disappointed."[1] In Mary the omnipotence of prayer finds its fullest expression. She may be termed with reason: *Omnipotentia supplex*—omnipotence on its knees before the Omnipotent—a truth expressed by our fathers in the pentameter line:

---

[1] I John v. 14.

[2] Cant. ii. 16. *Cf.* St. Bernard, *De Aquæductu*, xvi., xviii.

[3] Cant. ii. 2.

> Quod Deus imperio, tu prece, Virgo, potes.

All of which we may find exemplified by what passed of old between Jesus and His Mother at Cana of Galilee.

We have already considered the Miracle at Cana with some care, but in order to illustrate the truth we are now considering, we may perhaps be allowed briefly to summarise anew the story of which one never wearies.

Suddenly it was seen that more wine was needed at the Feast. All good gifts come from God alone, but He has established the Law of Prayer. He desires to lavish gifts upon us all, but He desires also that we should supplicate those gifts at His Hands, that thus we may merit in His sight. He waits to be asked. Therefore Mary asks. Nor does she use many words in her asking—many words are deemed advisable by those only who hesitate as to whether their petitions will be granted. She neither hesitates nor wavers, nor does she expect to be heard because of much speaking.[1] She simply asks, and thus fulfils her appointed office. "They have no wine." Our Lord, as is so often His wont, when prayer is made on earth—even prayer most acceptable in His Sight from His dearest friends and servants—does not immediately signify assent. He will elicit that perseverance in prayer which He loves. "Mine hour is not yet come." But Mary *knows* that her prayer will be heard by Christ. She has prayed and that is enough. She cannot be disappointed. Her will is perfectly attuned to the Will of her Son, and on this account His Will is attuned to her will. Not for one moment does she hesitate or fear the result. Nor is it necessary to utter further words to Christ. She perseveres in silence. He reads her heart and understands.

---

[1] *De Aquæductu*, viii.

There are those who think that the bride or bridegroom, or perhaps some of their friends who already believed that Christ was the Son of God, when they saw that the wine was running short, spoke to our Lady that she might intercede in their behalf—if so the event proves that they acted wisely, though it involved asking a miracle at the hands of Him who had not yet begun His Ministry of miracle. It is, however, more probable that our Lady's intervention—her gentle plea—fell unsolicited from her loving lips.[1] However this may be, the result is the same—written for our instruction in the Holy Gospels—before our eyes. The beginning of Miracles, the first manifestation of the Glory of Jesus Christ, the consequent belief of His disciples, were due to the prayer of Mary the Mother of Jesus—the direct result of those simple words: "They have no wine"—spoken by her whose prayer is all-prevailing with her Son. God knows not how to refuse His Mother's prayer.

---

[1] Dr. Johnson has finely said: "Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topics of persuasion, but supplication of man to God can only cry for mercy."

II

Nor will Mary refuse to plead for her children.

Our Lady's office as Mother of Men.

> "Exceeding harm," writes St. Bernard, "one man and one woman have wrought us; nevertheless, thanks be to God, through one Man and one Woman all things are restored—together with a large interest of graces. For, the gift was not as the sin, but the greatness of the benefit surpasses the extent of the loss. So in truth the most Wise and most Merciful Creator did not break that which had been shaken, but rather preferred altogether to remake it, so that for our well-being He might form a new Adam from the old, and might change Eve into Mary. And indeed Christ might have sufficed—surely all our sufficiency is of Him—but it would not have been good for us that Man should be alone. Rather was it fitting that both sexes should take part in our Reparation,

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 209.

for neither sex had been guiltless of our Fall. Assuredly, a faithful and most powerful Mediator between God and man is the Man Christ Jesus, but men fearfully worship in Him the Majesty of God. The Humanity has been taken into the Godhead, not that its substance has been changed, but that its affections have been deified. We do not proclaim His Mercy alone, it is likewise proclaimed that He exercises Judgment, for though from those things which He has suffered He learned compassion[1] so that He is full of Mercy, still in Him is vested the office of Judgment. Lastly, 'our God is a consuming Fire.' How then should a sinner not fear to approach, lest, even as wax melts from the face of fire, he may also perish from the Face of God.

"Now, therefore, the Woman who is Blessed amongst women shall be seen not to be idle. In truth a place shall be found for her in His work of reconciliation. For we have need of a mediatress with the Mediator, nor can any be of greater advantage to us than Mary. Cruel indeed was the mediatress Eve, through whom the old serpent introduced his deadly poison even into man; but faithful is Mary who has prepared the antidote of salvation both for men and women. The one was the minister of seduction, the other of propitiation; the one suggests gainsaying, the other has brought us Redemption.

"Why should human weakness hesitate to approach to Mary? In her there is nothing that is austere, in her there is nothing that is terrible. She is altogether sweet, to all does she offer milk and wool.

---

[1] *Cf.* Heb. iv. 15; v. 2, 8.

> Carefully go over the whole course of the Gospel story, and if by chance you ever find her chide, if there be anything hard in her, if you meet with even a sign of the slightest indignation in Mary, then you may hold her in suspicion and fear to draw nigh to her. But if you find, as you will find, that everything which belongs to her is full of motherly kindness and grace, full of gentleness and mercy—then render thanks to Him who in His most loving Mercy, has provided for you such a mediatress in whom you find nothing to dread. She has become all things to all men; by her overflowing charity she has made herself debtor both to the wise and to the foolish. To all does she open the bosom of her mercy, that all may receive of her fulness—the captive redemption, the sick man health, the sinner pardon, the just grace, the angel joy, finally the whole Trinity glory, the Person of the Son the substance of His human Flesh—so that there be none to hide himself from the warmth [of her love]."[1]

In another sermon St. Bernard develops the same thought:

> "With all the affection of our hearts let us, then, venerate Mary—for such is the Will of Him, who has willed us to have all through Mary. This I say is His Will—let it be well observed for our sake. In all things and by means of all things providing for the miserable, He soothes our anxieties, excites our faith, strengthens our hope, drives away our diffidence, raises us from our lack of courage. Thou

---

[1] *Sermo de Duodecim prærogativis B.V.M.*, I. ii.

(O man) didst fear to approach to the Father; terrified by the very sound of His Voice, thou didst hide thyself amidst the leaves of the trees.[1] He gave thee Jesus as thine Advocate. What will not such a Son obtain from such a Father? Surely He shall be heard on account of the reverence that is due to Him,[2] for the Father loveth the Son. But art thou afeared to go even to Him? He is thy Brother and thy flesh, tempted in all things without sin, that He might be made merciful.[3] Mary gave Him to thee to be thy Brother. But perchance thou mayest fear in Him the Majesty of God, in that, though He was made Man, still He remained God. Dost thou desire an advocate with Him? Have recourse to Mary. In truth there is pure humanity in Mary—pure not only because she is free from any stain, but also because she possesses nothing but humanity. Nor would I shrink from saying that she also will be heard on account of the reverence that is due to her. Surely the Son will hear His Mother, and the Father will hear the Son. My little children, this is the sinner's ladder, this is my greatest confidence, this is the whole ground of my hope. Can, then, the Son either repel His Mother, or Himself suffer a repulse? Can the Son either not hear, or Himself not be heard? Neither assuredly. 'Thou hast found,' said the Angel, 'grace with God.' Most happily. Always will she find His grace, and grace is all we need. The prudent Virgin did not seek wisdom, like Solomon, nor riches, nor honours, nor power, but grace. Surely it is grace by which we are saved."[4]

---

[1] *Cf.* Gen. iii. 8.

[2] Heb. v. 7.

[3] Heb. iv. 15; v. 2.

[4] *De Aquæductu*, vii.

I have quoted these passages at length not only by reason of their intrinsic beauty, but because they seem to me to go to the very heart of the matter.

Let there be no misunderstanding. It is not that we doubt the Father's Mercy. He is the All-Merciful, the All-Loving—Infinite in His Mercy and in His Love. Who should fear to go to His Father in Heaven, that has ever pondered the Parable of the Prodigal Son? We too, sure of a welcome, may rise and say: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee. I am not now worthy to be called Thy son." Still, we reflect upon His Awful Holiness and are troubled until we remember that He has given us a Mediator.

God hath so loved the world as to give us His only begotten Son. How can we fear *Him?* He has clothed Himself with human Flesh. He has looked upon the world which He made and in His Eyes shone the light of perfect human Love. He laid His Hands in Blessing on the heads of little children; within His Breast there beat a human Heart. The infinite Mercy of the Father is mirrored and reflected in the Sacred Heart of His Incarnate Son. He is our Brother. With human Lips He cried aloud: "Come unto Me all ye that are wearied and heavy laden and find rest for your souls." A thousand times, in one gentle parable after another, with most loving words, He declared that He came not to condemn the world, but to save the world, that never would He cast out the poor sinner who with the Magdalen should cling to His Feet and water them with repentant tears. For us all, His Arms were extended on the Cross, that we might find a refuge within their wide embrace. "Who shall condemn us?" asks the great Apostle. "Is it Christ Jesus who died for us?" In all our sins and miseries we know, as Catholics in every age have known, that we may go with uttermost confidence to the Feet of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Still, sometimes we *are* depressed, sometimes we *do* fear even when kneeling before our most Merciful Lord, as we remember the Wrath of the Lamb, whilst the other side of our religion comes before our thoughts—the terrible side of our religion, for such a side there is, and it is fatal to allow it to fade away altogether from our minds. What then are we to do, when we shudder at the remembrance of our infidelities, of our coldness in God's service, of our ingratitude, and think of the just judgments of God? St. Bernard suggests a remedy, which shall soon chase away despondency. The Father has given us Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ our Lord has given us His Mother. When we think of her, we cannot, if we would, find in her a terrible side, for in her there is no terrible side to find. She is not God. Judgment has not been committed to her. She is altogether human—*siquidem pura humanitas in Maria*. Her one duty in our regard, as her one joy, is to plead for men. Who can be so perverse as to fear her, whose heart is filled with a mother's tender love for her sinful children? To Mary we may fly in the uttermost confidence, beseeching her to teach us to trust Jesus Christ our Lord. We do not go to Mary rather than to Jesus—God forbid. Neither, if we perversely fear our Lord, do we go to Mary that we may continue in that fear. No Catholic could have imagined such a thought. We go to Mary because we would no longer fear our Lord. We go to Mary, beseeching her to lead us to Jesus, praying her to show unto us Jesus, as of old she showed Him to the Shepherds and to the Kings. This prayer will never be refused by our Lady. As we pray to her, all fear falls away. The Babe in her Arms smiles upon those who kneel at His Blessed Mother's Feet; the dying Christ looks down with a love that casts out fear upon those he sees, beneath His Cross, by His Mother's Side. He reconciles us to God our Father.

Once again, it is not that we think Mary more merciful than Jesus, any more than we think Jesus more merciful than the Father. A thousand times no! Such blasphemies appal the Catholic. It is horrible, though I think that it is necessary, to be compelled to mention them, even in passing. Every Catholic knows that the mercy of Mary is but as a tiny drop in the ocean, when compared with the Mercy of God—the boundless Fount of Infinite

Compassion. The mercy of Mary is a pure gift from God. Mary is the Queen of Mercy because she is the Mother of the All-Merciful, and has drawn Mercy from His Heart. Nevertheless, she *has* drawn that Mercy in abundant measure. Also, by His grace she is sinless, and she is our Mother as well as His. So we sinful creatures fly in our necessities to our sinless mother, knowing that we shall not be disappointed! "Let him keep silence on thy mercy," wrote St. Bernard, "O Blessed Virgin, if such there be, who remembers that thou hast failed him, when he invoked thee in his necessity,"[1] but for such a one we should search in vain. None can be found who have invoked the mercy of Mary to no purpose. In small things and in great, let us seek her aid and all good things shall be granted unto us.

These, then, are the steps of the sinner's ladder. Often we ask the aid of our friends on earth, and of the Saints in Heaven. We do well.

But the Saints point us to Mary. Like them, she is a creature made from nothing, owing all to her Lord, yet having a relation to her Lord—a claim on her Lord—such as has been given to no other—dear to her Lord beyond all the children of men.

Mary points us to that Lord—her Lord and our Lord, her God and our God. If we will trust her, she will place us happy, rested, peaceful in His Arms.

---

[1] *De Assumptione B.V.M.*, Sermo II., viii.

Mary's Son leads us to His Father, who is our Father too, until at length we find our home in our Father's house, where there is room, with Christ, not only for Mary Most Holy, not only for His great Saints, but also for us, since in that Father's House there are many Mansions, and there our Brother has prepared a place even for us. Then we shall see Him as He is. But for a while ofttimes we find ourselves fainting by the way, exiles in this valley of tears. Let us then pray much to Mary, our most gentle and loving Advocate with her Divine Son.

Should these pages fall under the eyes of some devout Christian, not yet a Catholic, who may feel that I place Mary where he places Christ, I would implore him to consider. Is it not that he places Christ in too low a sphere, rather than that we ascribe too high an office to His Mother? Our Lord Jesus Christ is not a Saint, as is His Mother, albeit their Queen. He is God, made Man for love of us, but still the Lord our God. I do not think that there is danger lest any Catholic should dream that the Blessed Virgin is more merciful than God, the Fount of Mercy; I am sure that there is real danger lest some Protestants should fancy that the Incarnate Son is more merciful than the Father of Mercies and Infinite Compassion.

CHAPTER XV

MARY MOTHER OF DIVINE GRACE

"*Hapless are they who neglect Mary under pretext of the honour to be paid to Jesus Christ. As if the Child could be found elsewhere than with the Mother.*"—Pope Pius X.

It is certain that all graces come to men from God and from God alone. They are His free gifts, to which, of our own merits, we can lay no claim. God is the sole source and origin of every supernatural assistance bestowed upon His creature, whether it be enlightenment of the mind or strengthening of the will. So close, however, and so intimate are the relations of the Blessed Virgin with her Divine Son—especially in His work of the salvation of mankind, which was accomplished through the Mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption—that it has come to be widely believed in the Catholic Church that all graces are bestowed by God through Mary's hands, as the fruit of her intercession.

Our Lady's universal intercession.

This opinion is not only held by a number of the Faithful; it has been taught by great Saints and by learned Theologians. In our own day it has been inculcated by Popes—not of course in an *ex Cathedra* definition of Faith, but in Encyclical Letters addressed to the Universal Church.

Both Pius IX., in a letter to the Catholic world, written from Gaeta, and Leo XIII., in an Encyclical on the Rosary,[1] quoted the words of St. Bernard: "God hath willed that we should receive all things through Mary," and Pius X. laid down the same principles emphatically in his Encyclical Letter on the Jubilee of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception.

In like manner, the Church prays: "O Lord God Almighty, who hast willed us to have all things through the Immaculate Mother of Thy Son. . . ."[2]

St. Alphonsus has written:

> "I shall always deem myself happy to have embraced and preached it [the doctrine that all graces come to us through Mary]—were it only because this doctrine greatly enkindles my piety towards Mary, whereas the opposite doctrine chills it—a thing which is to my thinking of no small disadvantage."[3]

And St. Germanus of Constantinople:

> "No one is saved but through thee, O Mother of God; no one escapes from dangers but through thee, O Virgin Mother; no one receives any gift of God but through thee, O thou who art full of grace."[4]

---

[1] *Iucunda semper*, September 8, 1894.

[2] *Postcom. Fest. Im. Mariæ a Sacro Numismate.*

[3] *Glories of Mary*, p. 577.

[4] Serm., *In Dormit. B.V.M.*

An opinion which comes to us thus supported demands at least our respect and attention. We may not lightly set aside that which has been taught by Saints and Doctors of the Church and by successive Vicars of Christ, and has been inserted in the very Liturgy. *Lex orandi—lex credendi.* We shall not then be surprised to find Dr. Hedley, a name ever to be held in honour by English Catholics, writing as follows:

> "Whenever you pray to Jesus, Mary is very near. She is intended to be the *enforcement* of Jesus. . . . There is no doubt that all grace passes through her hands to come to us."[1]

When we come to examine the ground upon which this opinion rests, apart from the weight afforded it by authority, it will, I think, appear only congruous that, as we received the Author of grace, so we should receive grace itself, through Mary.

Mary's part in the Mystery of the Visitation.

We know that this was actually the case in the Mystery of the Visitation. Our Lady visited Elisabeth. Her Divine Son lavished His graces on the favoured house of Zachary. Zachary recovered the use of speech, Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, the Baptist was sanctified within his Mother's womb—all when Mary spoke.

When Catholic ascetical writers, following the tradition handed down by St. Ephrem, have attributed the conversion of the Good Thief to our Lady's prayers,[1] Protestants have scoffed. Unless it had been written by the Evangelist, "And it came to pass that when Elisabeth heard the Salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost," we can imagine the chorus of hostile criticism that would have arisen had Catholics ventured to opine that these wondrous favours had been granted through Mary —when Mary spoke. But in this case at least, we *know* that it was so. No one who believes the Gospel can deny that our Lady was the chosen channel of grace to the Baptist before his birth, when he was filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. "Whence is this unto me, that the Mother of my Lord should come unto me? As soon as thy salutation sounded in mine ear, the babe leapt in my womb for joy."

---

[1] *A Spiritual Retreat for Priests*, p. 187.

Does it not appear probable that a pattern was then set by God which should be as a law in the Divine distribution of grace—that His graces should hereafter be bestowed upon man by the Incarnate Word, through His Mother's mediation?

---

[1] "Adam when naked was beautiful. His thrifty wife furnished him with a garment wrought by her hands—to wit, a filthy garment, all defiled with the guilt of grievous sin. However, Paradise saw the first made man in his fallen state, and mourned the fall to which he himself had given cause. Mary sought out another garment for the penitent thief, fitted it on him, and, with the promise that then was added, raised him up to hopes of a better lot. Him, too, Paradise saw, with open arms embraced him, and allotted to him the seat that was vacant through Adam's banishment."—*De Paradisi Eden*, *Opp. Syr.*, vol. iii., p. 572.

Some of the Fathers lay stress upon the fact that the Blessed Virgin remained three months in the house of Elisabeth.

Origen writes as follows:

> "There should be a reason, both for all that is said and all the events recorded, that is worthy of the Holy Ghost and of the Faith of Christ to which, as believers, we are called. Therefore we must now seek the reason why Mary, after the conception of Christ, went to Elisabeth and remained with her three months, and also why Luke, in writing the Gospel History, records that fact that Mary remained with Elisabeth three months, and afterwards returned to her own house. There must certainly be some special reason for this. Whether the Lord has opened our hearts to understand it, this present discourse will show.
>
> "Now if, from the mere fact of Mary's visit and salutation to Elisabeth, the infant exulted with joy, and Elisabeth, full of the Holy Ghost, uttered, by the spirit of prophecy, what is written in the Gospel, and in one single hour derived so great profit, we are only left to conjecture what progress John made during the three months that Mary was assisting Elisabeth. For it is quite unreasonable to suppose that in one single moment the infant should exult, and, so to say, revel with joy, and Elisabeth be filled with the Holy Ghost, and that during three months, neither John nor Elisabeth should

> have further profited from the nearness of the Lord's Mother, and the presence of the Saviour Himself. We must therefore conclude that during the three months, John was being trained and exercised, so to speak, in the art of an athlete by the Holy Mother, and so prepared in his own mother's womb, that being born, as he was, in a marvellous manner, he might be still more marvellously nurtured."[1]

St. Jerome translated into Latin for the use of his spiritual children St. Paula and St. Eustochium the Homily from which the above passage is taken.

Similarly, St. Ambrose has written:

> "Well is Holy Mary represented as having fulfilled her office of charity. For friendly intercourse was not the only reason of her stay, but also the advancement of so great a prophet. If at her first entrance such great progress was made, that, at Mary's salutation, the infant leaped in the womb, and the infant's mother was filled with the Holy Ghost, how greatly must we not suppose that this progress was increased by the presence of Holy Mary, during so long a time."[2]

Certain analogies.

In the Church of God, which is the treasure-house of His grace, the position of our Lord is unique—so also (but at an infinite distance) is that of His Glorious Mother. St. Bernardine of Siena illustrated this truth by a striking figure:

> "The Blessed Virgin is the neck of our Head, through which all spiritual gifts are communicated to the mystical Body of her Son."[3]

---

[1] Luke i. 80. Hom. II., p. 1822.

[2] *Expos. in Luc., in loc.*

[3] Dom. I. in Quadrages., Serm. X., a. i., c. 3.

This thought has been developed by the learned Cardinal Bellarmine:

> "Christ is the Head of the Church and Mary is the Church's neck. All divine favours, all graces, all heavenly influences come to us from Christ, as from the Head. They all descend to the body by Mary, just as in the human organism it is by the neck that the head vivifies its members. In the body of man there are arms, shoulders and feet. There is only one head and only one neck. Similarly, in the Church I behold several Apostles, many Martyrs, many Confessors, many Virgins. There is, however, but one only Son of God, one only Mother of God."[1]

This analogy drawn from the human body, representing the Blessed Mother of God as the point of union and contact between the Divinity and humanity, between our Lord and His Church, is seen to be peculiarly apposite, when we remember that the neck, though uniting the head and the body, is itself one of the members of the body. Mary, too, is one of the members of the mystical Body of Christ, though the most noble. Our Lady depended absolutely upon God her Saviour for her spiritual life, receiving first and in full measure the grace which through her was to descend to all Christians. God filled with grace the soul of her who already, even before she became the Mother of God, was hailed by Gabriel as full of grace.

---

[1] *Concio. XLII., De Nativitate B.V.M.*

This recalls to our mind another analogy, which we also owe to the great St. Bernard in his sermon *De Aquæductu*, from which I have already quoted in this book.[1] St. Bernard comments very beautifully on the words of the Apostle: "You have as for your end Life Everlasting."[2]

> "Life Everlasting is the unfailing Fountain, the well of living waters, which rush as a torrent from Mount Libanus, and the torrent of this stream gives joy to the City of God. But what is the fountain of life, save Christ our Lord? . . . That heavenly stream descended through an aqueduct, not bestowing the fulness of the fountain, but pouring drops of grace into thirsty hearts, granting to some more and to others less. Full, assuredly, was the aqueduct, so that these others might receive of its fulness, but not the fulness itself. You have discovered, if I mistake not, whom it has pleased me to call the aqueduct, who it was that received the fulness of the fountain from the Father's heart, and then gave Him to us, if not as He is, yet at least so far as we are able to receive Him. For you know to whom it has been said: 'Hail thou who art full of grace.' Should we not marvel that one could be found, to be made such and so great an aqueduct, of which the top, like the Ladder seen by the Patriarch, should reach the Heavens.[3] Yes, and should pass the Heavens, and come to that most Life-giving fountain of waters, which is above the heavens. . . . Look therefore on high and see with how great an abundance of devotion He has wished us to honour

---

[1] *Cf.* pp. 307, 308. [2] Romans vi.22. [3] Gen. xxviii. 12.

> her—*He who has placed all fulness of good in Mary*, so that if there be any hope in us, if there be any grace, if there be any health, we may know that it flows from her, who ascended on high overflowing in delights.[1] She is—who can doubt it?—the garden of delights, through which the Divine breeze has blown from Heaven, so that her perfumes are flowing over—that is to say, the abundance of her grace. Take away the sun which enlightens the world, and where is the day? Take away Mary, the star of the sea, that illumines the mighty ocean, and what will remain but an enveloping darkness and the shadow of death and densest obscurity? Therefore with all the affection of our hearts, with all the love of our being, with all our aspirations heavenwards, let us venerate her, for such is His will, *who has willed that we should have all things through Mary*."[2]

In this passage St. Bernard compares the Blessed Mother of God to the Ladder seen by Jacob, which reached from earth to heaven. This mysterious Ladder is commonly held by the Fathers to be a type of Mary.

Thus St. Ephrem writes:

> "Hail Mother of all. Hail fountain of grace and the solace of all. Hail refuge and hospice of sinners. Hail mercy seat of the afflicted. Hail place of sanctuary in Jerusalem. Hail most glorious abode of our Creator. . . . Hail Queen of heavenly citizens and Mistress of the Angels. Hail gate of Heaven, *the Ladder whereby all may ascend on*

---

[1] *Quæ ascendit deliciis affluens.*

[2] *De Aquæductu*, III. vi.

> *high.* Hail most safe port of voyagers here on earth. Hail firm salvation of all Christians who in truth and sincerity have recourse to thee."[1]

In like manner, in a sermon attributed to St. Eleutherius, Bishop of Tournay, who lived in the fifth century:

> "*Thou art made the heavenly Ladder.* . . . Thou hast become the Ladder whereby the Glory of Heaven has descended to earth, that thus humility may be borne aloft to the heights of heaven. . . . Let us, therefore, beseech the Virgin to reconcile God to men, and cause concord betwixt the things of earth and of heaven. May she intercede for the past, may she supplicate her Son for the future. O Virgin, give us not only food for the body, but also the Bread of Angels that hath come down to the sanctuary of thy womb. Make us to fear the Son of God. 'For the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.'"[2]

If we reflect on this Ladder seen by Jacob we shall see how strikingly it typifies our Lady and her powerful intercession.

"And Jacob saw in his sleep a Ladder standing upon the earth and the top thereof touching heaven —the Angels of God also ascending and descending by it."

The Ladder stood upon the earth; its summit reached the sky. Mary by her nature belongs to the earth; by her dignity of Mother of God, she touches Heaven. Through her, Jesus our Lord has come down to us. Through her, we may ascend to Him. Through her, our prayers from earth reach the throne of the Eternal, for she is the mystic Ladder on which the Angels of God ascended on high; and, as on the same ladder they descended to the earth, so through Mary, all blessings from above and all graces purchased by the Saviour's Blood come down to men.

---

[1] *Thren. B.V.M. Opp. Gr. et Lat.*, Tom. III., p. 575 *seq.*

[2] *Serm. in Annuntiat. Fest.*

The Tradition of the Greek Church.

I have had the privilege of questioning Mgr. Paul Abi-Murad, Archbishop of Damietta and Patriarchal Delegate in Jerusalem, as to the Tradition of the Greek Catholic Church on this subject. He dictated to me in French the following observations, which I told him that I should publish, after translating them into English: "From the times of remotest Antiquity the Oriental Church has shown a great veneration towards the Holy Virgin Mother of God. In all the Christian Churches of the East may be seen in the Iconastases—by the side of the Image of our Saviour—the Image of the Holy Virgin; and during our religious functions after having incensed the Image of our Saviour we incense that of the Holy Virgin. Our office books are filled with antiphons and collects in honour of the Holy Virgin. Our Faithful have great confidence in the Holy Virgin, and are greatly attached to her worship. During Lent we chant on Fridays, in the evening, the office called *Akathistos*,[1] containing the praises of the Holy Virgin. This office is attended by a great crowd of people—the churches are filled with the Faithful. A preacher, preaching on the Merits and the efficacy of the intercession of the Holy Virgin, would be able to say, without astonishing the Faithful: 'O Virgin Mary, you are the Mother of our Saviour. Our Saviour will grant you all graces, if we ask them by you. You are all-powerful with the Saviour. You are the Channel by which we receive the grace of our Saviour.' Preaching after this manner he would be preaching in accordance with our Greek Catholic Tradition and custom."

As the Archbishop proceeded to observe, the Tradition inherited by the Greek Catholics is that of St. Ignatius, St. Athanasius, St. Basil, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. John Chrysostom, St. Epiphanius, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Germanus and St. John Damascene, to mention the names only of the greatest of their Fathers and Doctors.

Anyone who will examine the Greek Liturgy and Office books for himself will see at once that they are penetrated throughout by belief in the universal intercession of our Lady.[2] If the Greeks did not believe that the Blessed Virgin is the ordinary channel of grace, how account for the fact—to which there is no parallel amongst us Latins—that in all the Liturgical offices, at all the canonical Hours, at Mass, even at grace before and after meals, every prayer to our Lord is followed immediately by a *Theotokion* or prayer to the Mother of God, in which she is entreated to present our prayers to her Divine Son. Prayer to His Blessed Mother is everywhere so interwoven with prayer to our Lord as to become one indivisible whole.

---

[1] The Hymn during which no one sits.

[2] The Schismatic ("Orthodox") and Catholic Greeks use the same Liturgy.

Moreover, the Greek Liturgy employs in addressing our Lady terms so bold that they could never be tolerated in the West, and would be judged as most gravely heretical, were it not that hyperbolical expressions are in ordinary use, and universally understood as such in the East. For example, the Blessed Virgin is addressed now as the "Saviour of the world,"[1] and again as the "expiation of all the world."[2] All Christians in the East, as in the West, know that, in the strict sense of the words, our Lord alone is our Saviour, and that He alone is the Expiation of our sins. There is no danger that such expressions, when applied to the Blessed Virgin, should be misunderstood by Orientals—words are only conventional symbols, and words employed by Catholics must be interpreted according to the Catholic Faith—at the same time, by their very unexpectedness they testify to the position assigned, without hesitation, by Eastern Christians to the Mother of the Redeemer in the economy of our salvation.

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 328, n. 3.

[2] *παντὸς τοῦ κόσμου ἐξίλασμα.*

Out of examples of this attitude towards our Lady which abound on every page of the Greek sacred books, I will give a few which may represent the rest:

1. The morning prayers in the *Horologion* begin with the sign of the Cross. "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. O God, holy, strong, eternal, have mercy upon us."

The Gloria Patri follows, with the prayer: "Most Holy Trinity, have mercy upon us." Then we have the Kyrie Eleison terminated by three short invocations to our Lord, to each one of which is appended: "O God, Thou art Holy, Holy, Holy. *Through the Mother of God have mercy upon us.*"[1]

2. Throughout the Canonical Hours, after each collect, there is a special *Theotokion* or prayer to the Blessed Virgin.

The first of these, at Matins, runs as follows: "We entreat thee, O Virgin, Mother of God, who art the impregnable (*ἀπόρθητον*) wall and fortification of our salvation—scatter the plans of those who are opposed to us; change into joy the sorrow of thy people; restore the world that is thine; strengthen thy faithful; intercede for the peace of the world; for thou, O Mother of God, art our hope."[2]

---

[1] *διὰ τῆς Θεοτόκου ἐλέησον ἧμας.*

[2] *ὡρολόγιον τὸ μέγα* (printed at Athens by George Phexi), p. 22.

And the third: "We—all the generations—bless thee, Virgin Mother of God. Blessed are we too, who possess thy protection. For by night and by day thou dost intercede for us . . . wherefore, hymning thee, we cry to thee: Hail thou that art full of grace, the Lord is with thee."[1]

I will now give two *Theotokia* from Terce.

The first:

"O Mother of God, thou art the true Vine which produced the fruit of life.[2] We beseech thee, O Lady, pray for us with the Apostles and all the Saints, to obtain mercy for our souls."

And the next:

"Thou, O immaculate Mother of God, art the hope and protection and refuge of Christians, the impregnable wall of those who contend, thou art our tranquil harbour; as, then, by thy ceaseless intercession thou art the Saviour of the world,[3] remember us too, O Virgin thou who art all worthy of praise."

3. At the grace for the evening meal:

"Make us worthy of thy gifts, O Virgin Mother of God, overlooking our transgressions, and affording healing to those who, in faith, share in thy praises, O Immaculate!"

4. Finally in the Liturgy itself:

---

[1] *Id.*, p. 26.

[2] ἥ ἄμπελος ἥ ἀληθινή, ἥ βλαστήσασα τὸν καρπὸν τῆς ζωῆς.

[3] τὸν κόσμον σῴζουσα τῇ ἀπαύστῳ πρεσβείᾳ σου.

Before the priest vests, he prays as follows:

"Open to us the gate of thy mercy, O Blessed Mother of God. Placing our hope in thee let us not be disappointed . . . for thou art the salvation of the race of Christians."[1] And then soon there follows another *Theotokion*: "O thou who art constituted a fountain of mercy, make us worthy of compassion; O Mother of God, look upon thy sinful people, show forth, as ever, thy power. For, hoping in thee, we cry out to thee, Hail, as of old did Gabriel the leader of all the Angels."

And after the preparation of the Bread and Wine, the priest prays: "To the honour of the most blessed glorious Mother of God and ever Virgin Mary, our Lady, together with whose intercessions, O Lord, do Thou show forth this sacrifice before Thy heavenly altar."[2] This prayer is followed by a mystical division by the Liturgical Spear, of a part of the Host called the Portion of the Mother of God,[3] during which the verse is repeated: "The Queen stood on thy Right Hand, in golden raiment, wrought about with many colours."

The application of these words of the Psalmist to the Blessed Virgin at this solemn moment manifests in a way that cannot be misunderstood, the mind of the Eastern Church as to the intercession of the glorious Queen of Heaven with her Divine Son.

---

[1] *σὺ, γὰρ εἶ ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ γένους τῶν Χρῖστιανῶν.*

[2] *ἧς ταῖς πρεσβείαις πρόσδεξαι, Κύριε, τὴν θυσίαν ταύτην εἰς τὸ ὑπερουράνιον σου θυσιαστήριον.*

[3] *τὴν μέριδα τῆς Θεοτόκου.*

No physical intervention of our Lady in the distribution of graces.

When it is said that God bestows all graces through the hands of Mary, it is possible that a misconception may arise, as though it were held that grace came to men through some *physical* intervention of our Lady. It should hardly be necessary to observe that nothing could be further from the truth than any such opinion. God is a Spirit, and bestows His graces by direct action upon the soul of man. Nevertheless, all graces are given to men through the Man Christ Jesus. The only question that can arise, is whether, to the unique Mediation of our Redeemer is always joined the prayer of His Blessed Mother? This prayer, and this prayer alone is symbolised by the rays represented as descending upon the world, for example in the Miraculous Medal. The Blessed Virgin certainly co-operated in the *Meriting* of grace by the consent which she gave to the Incarnation at Nazareth, and to the Passion on Calvary. Can she be rightly separated from the *Distribution* of that grace to redeemed souls, or does she here also co-operate by her prayer? (To share in the distribution of grace is a less wonderful privilege than to share in its acquisition.) The action of our Lady is shown forth figuratively in that of the Deacon at High Mass. The Deacon not only furnishes the matter of the Sacrifice, but also assists the celebrating priest in its distribution to the Faithful at Communion.

St. Alphonsus writes as follows:

> "When an opinion tends in any way to the honour of Mary, if this opinion in no way contradicts either the Faith, or the decrees of the Church, nor is opposed to any truth—above all, if it has some foundation on which to rest, to reject and argue against it, merely because the opposite opinion may be true, shows little devotion to the Mother of God."[1]

No one will assert that the opinion that all graces, since the Incarnation, come through Mary, is a dogma of the Faith, or will wish to impose it, as such, upon any to whom it does not appeal, or who, in their hearts, do not believe in its truth. On the other hand, none can assert that it in any way contradicts either the Faith, the decrees, or the spirit of the Church, or that it is opposed to any truth. On the contrary, it is in complete concord with the Analogy of the Faith—recognising, as it does, an office belonging to the Blessed Mother of God, which seems appropriate to her who, undoing the work of our first mother, was so closely associated with the Second Adam in that Reparation of humanity, from which all graces ultimately are derived. Moreover, as we read the writings of the

---

[1] *The Glories of Mary*, p. 132.

Saints, we feel that it harmonises with their attitude towards Mary, and also with the mind of our Mother the Church, whose liturgical prayers and hymns constantly urge her children to have recourse to Mary in all their needs. It has consequently—to state the matter at its lowest—some solid foundation upon which to rest.

Such being the case, we may be reckoned happy, if, with so many of the Saints, we are able to give it the adhesion of our hearts and minds—happy if we believe that the dear Mother, who by her *Fiat* drew the Incarnate Word from His Father's Side, who shared, so far as mortal might, in all His Joys and in His Sorrows, who was baptised with the Baptism wherewith He was baptised, who drank so deeply of the Chalice of His bitter Passion, whose soul was pierced with the sword of cruel anguish, who now reigns with Him in Heaven, is thus intimately associated with the distribution of the graces obtained by His victory over sin and death. Happy are we, if we can feel that in no act of mercy and loving-kindness is the Mother separated from her Son.

Still, there will no doubt be many Catholics to whom this opinion will not seem sufficiently established to rest upon as a certainty. But if they are devout and humble, there will be no danger lest they take the attitude which St. Alphonsus deprecates. They will feel no desire positively to "reject and argue against" a belief so full of consolation to many of their brethren, so highly approved by ecclesiastical authority, so honourable to our Lady. Where a pious and approved devotion to the Blessed Mother of God is concerned, the work of hostile and purely negative criticism, which leads nowhere, may safely be left to those Protestants and unbelievers to whom it affords a congenial occupation. For my part, let the pen fall from my hand before I write aught in disparagement of the glories of my heavenly Queen; let my tongue cleave to my mouth, before it give utterance to a syllable that could lessen the confidence of any of the little ones of Christ, in the power and goodness of the Mother of my Lord.

In practice, all Catholics are agreed. When we feel the need of any special grace from God, let us ask it, relying upon Divine Promises, from our Father in Heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord; let us seek it in the Holy Mass, when the Host is raised; let us implore it with uttermost confidence from the Sacred Heart of our most loving Saviour; but let us never forget also to pray to Mary. She will obtain us the dispositions of soul of which we stand in need as we hear Mass, as we kneel before her Divine Son, as we implore the Mercy of God our Father. All that increases our confidence in Mary, will also increase our hope in God. Scattering the clouds of sadness and depression, trust in Mary's loving intercession will bring anew sunshine into our souls, and the graces of Heaven. We should, then, thank our Lord for every well-grounded belief that makes us trust His Blessed Mother with a deeper trust; as we should shrink with dread and horror from any line of thought, from any tendency, which serves, in however small a measure, to lessen that childlike confidence in Mary, which is one of God's choicest gifts to those that love and serve Him. Of so much as this, at any rate—if the writings of the Saints are to be our guide—there can be no doubt amongst Catholics. The words of St. Bernard should be deep in our hearts: "Spes mea Iesus et, post Iesum, Virgo Maria."

I will conclude this chapter with a prayer of St. Ephrem, which, beautiful in itself, may also serve to show that I am preaching no new doctrine, but one that was welcome and familiar to our Fathers in the Faith, even in the dim ages of Antiquity.

> "Most Holy Lady, alone most pure in soul and body, alone exceeding all in perfection of purity, in chastity and virginity—alone made in thine entirety, the home of the graces of the Most Holy Spirit—hence in purity and sanctity of soul and body excelling, beyond compare, even the Angelic Virtues—cast thine eyes upon me . . . my most Holy Lady, Mother of God, full of grace; glory of the nature that is ours in common; Dispenser of all good things; after the Trinity, the Mistress of all; after the Paraclete, another Consoler; after the Mediator, the whole world's Mediatress; than

Cherubim and Seraphim higher, beyond the power of words to tell, and more glorious by far; unsearchable Abyss of God's goodness; protection of the universe; Fulness of the grace of the Trinity; holding as it were the second place after the Trinity; Bridge of the whole world, leading us to the heights of heaven; Key introducing us to heaven. O thou, our Patron and our Mediatress, behold my confidence and my divinely inspired desire, since thou possessest both compassion and power. As the Mother of Him, who alone is Good and Merciful, do thou receive my most miserable soul and graciously obtain, through thy mediation and defence, that it be found at the right hand of thine only-begotten Son."[1]

[1] *Precationes ad Deiparam. Opp. Gr. et Lat.*, III., pp. 524-537.

CHAPTER XVI

MARY PREFIGURED IN WOMEN OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

> Tu gloria Ierusalem, tu lætitia Israel,
> Tu honorificentia populi nostri.
>
> JUDITH xv. 10.

Old Testament types of our Lord and of His Mother.

WE know that our Lord was prefigured by His Saints living on earth before His coming. Abel showed forth His Innocence, Job His Patience, Melchizedech His Priesthood, Isaac His Death, Jonah His Burial and Resurrection, Moses His Ministry, Samson His Strength, David His Royalty, Solomon His Wisdom. We shall not therefore be surprised to find His Mother foreshadowed by the women and especially by the heroines of Israel. But, as St. Thomas would have us remember, in considering a *figure*, we should only look for likeness in one or other point, and should not be surprised to find many dissimilarities. There is no question of *identity*, but only of a certain resemblance in one respect or another between the great figures which stand out in our Sacred Writings

—shadows of the substance—and Jesus and Mary who were to come.

1. Eve. We have already considered Eve as, in motherhood, a type of Mary. Our Lady undid Eve's work and became, in the supernatural order, the Mother of the Redeemed, as in the natural order Eve is the first mother of us all.

2. Sara. Isaac lying bound upon the altar of sacrifice is one of the great types of our Lord. We expect therefore to find in the mother of Isaac a type of the Mother of Christ. It will not, then, be surprising to find that the maternity of Sara, like the maternity of Mary, was beyond the laws of nature. When her son Isaac was born, his mother said: "God hath given me cause to laugh with joy; whosoever shall hear it shall laugh with me."[1] If Sara rejoiced together with her friends at her marvellous childbearing, how much more do not the Angels and all the Saints join in the joy of Mary the Virgin at the Birth of Christ. There is, however, as is invariably the case, a contrast between the type and the antitype. St. Ambrose prays to God: "Receive me in that flesh which fell in Adam. Receive me *not* from Sara but from Mary—from Mary the Virgin incorrupt, the Virgin free, through grace, from every stain of sin."[2]

3. Rebecca. Of Rebecca we read that "she was an exceeding comely maid, and a most

---

[1] Gen. xxi. 6.

[2] *In Ps.* cxviii., Serm. XXXII. 30.

beautiful virgin and not known to man."[1] In the Providence of God she was prepared to be the spouse of Isaac, as Mary was prepared to be the Spouse of the Holy Spirit. The charming idyll runs as follows: Abraham, now an old man, sent his trusty steward back to the land of his birth, there to choose from amongst his own people a fitting wife for his son Isaac. As the messenger—his journey ended—came to the city of Naahor, "when he had made the camels to lie down without the town near a well of water in the evening, at the time when women are wont to draw out water, he said: O! Lord the God of my master Abraham, meet me to-day, I beseech thee, and show kindness to my master Abraham. Behold I stand nigh the spring of water, and the daughters of the inhabitants of the city will come out to draw water. Now therefore the maid to whom I shall say: 'Let down the pitcher that I may drink,' and she shall answer: 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also'; let it be the same that Thou hast provided for Thy servant Isaac, and by this I shall understand that Thou hast shown kindness to my master. He had not yet ended these words within himself, and behold Rebecca came out . . . and the steward ran to meet her, and said: 'Give me a little water to drink of thy pitcher'; and she answered: 'Drink, my lord.' And quickly she let down the pitcher upon her arm and gave him to drink. And when he had drunk, she said: 'I will draw water for thy camels also, till they all drink.' And pouring out the pitcher into the troughs, she ran back to the well to draw water, and having drawn she gave to all the camels. But he musing beheld her in silence."[1]

---

[1] Gen. xxiv. 16.

At the end of his sermon on the vision in the Apocalypse of the Woman who appeared as a Wonder in Heaven, which he applies to Mary, St. Bernard prayed as follows:

> "Thou art full of grace, O Mother of Mercy! Thou art filled with the dew from heaven, leaning upon the Beloved, overflowing with delights! Give food to us this day, to us thy poor servants, O Lady. Let the whelps too eat of the crumbs [that fall from thy table]. And give not water from thy overflowing pitcher to Abraham's steward alone, but even to the camels [that is to us]. For thou in truth art the Maiden chosen and made ready for the Son of the Most High, who is God over all Blessed for ever."

4. Rachel.

Rachel won the heart of Jacob, as Mary won the Heart of God. Two sons were given her, Joseph, and, after many years, Benjamin. Joseph, who was sold into captivity by his brethren but afterwards became the saviour of his people, is one of the principal types of Christ the Saviour, who was sold for thirty pieces of silver. When Joseph was born, Rachel's heart was gladdened, but she suffered much at the birth of Benjamin, whom she called Benoni, which means son of my pain.[1] Thus also Mary rejoiced with great joy at the painless Birth of Jesus Christ, but her second childbearing was accomplished with sorrows beyond all thought. We are all *Benoni*, children of her pain.

---

[1] Gen. xxiv. 11-21.

5. Miriam. Miriam, or Mary, the sister of Moses and Aaron, is regarded by the Fathers as a figure of our Lady. We read in the Book of Exodus: "So Mary the Prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand and all the women went forth after her with timbrels and with dances, and she began the song to them, saying: Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously mighty, the horse and the rider He hath thrown into the sea."[2] Miriam led the people of God, after the passage of the Red Sea and the destruction of the hosts of evil, to the chosen land, flowing with milk and honey, the vision of peace, which is a type of the heavenly country, whither Christians are journeying through a wilderness of temptation, pursued by sin and Satan. With some such thoughts as these, mingled with the familiar words of Holy Scripture running in his mind, in order to console and encourage his well-loved spiritual daughter Eustochium, St. Jerome wrote as follows:

---

[1] *Id.* xxxv. 18.

[2] Exodus xv. 20-21.

> "What a day shall that be when Mary, the Lord's Mother, shall come to meet thee, attended with virgin choirs. When, after the Red Sea is passed, and Pharaoh with his host, have been overwhelmed, Mary, the sister of Aaron, bearing in her hand the timbrel, will lead the chant, to which they will make response: 'Let us sing to the Lord, for He is gloriously magnified, the horse and its rider He hath thrown into the sea.'"[1]

6 and 7. Debbora and Jael.

In the Book of Judges we read how "the children of Israel, in consequence of the evil which they did in the sight of the Lord, were delivered up into the hands of Jabin, king of Chanaan and Sisera the general of his army, who had nine hundred chariots set with scythes, and for twenty years had grievously oppressed them. And there was at that time Debbora a prophetess who judged the people, and she sat under a palm-tree which was called after her name, and the children of Israel came up to her for all judgments. And she sent and called Barac the son of Abinoem out of Cedes in Nephtali, and she said to him: 'The Lord God of Israel hath commanded thee: Go and lead an army to Mount Tabor, and thou shalt take with thee ten thousand fighting men of the children of Nephtali and of the children of Zabulon. And I will bring unto thee, in the place of the torrent Cison, Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, and all his multitude and will deliver them into thy hand.' And Barac said to her: 'If thou wilt come with me, I will go; if thou wilt not come with me, I will not go.' She said to him: 'I will go indeed with thee, but at this time the victory shall not be attributed to thee, because Sisera shall be delivered into the hand of a woman.'"[1]

---

[1] St. Jerome, *Ep.* XII., *Ad Eustochium. De custodia virginitatis. Cf. Ep.* XVIII.

God delivered Sisera into the hand of a woman, Jael by name, who by divine inspiration—in order to save her people—smote him with a hammer and drove the nail into his head.

"In that day Debbora and Barac son of Abinoem sang, and said: O you of Israel, that have willingly offered your lives to danger, bless ye the Lord . . . the valiant men ceased and rested in Israel, *until Debbora arose, until there arose a mother in Israel.*"[2] . . . My heart loveth the princes of Israel; O you that of your own good will offered yourselves to danger, bless ye the Lord. . . . Arise, arise, O Debbora, arise, arise and utter a canticle. Arise, Barac and take hold of thy captives, O son of Abinoem. The remnants of the people are saved, the Lord hath fought amongst the valiant ones . . . war from heaven was made against them, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Blessed amongst women be Jael, the wife of Heber the Cimite. Blessed may she be in her tent. . . . So let Thine enemies perish, O Lord, and let them that love Thee shine, as the sun shineth in his rising."[1]

---

[1] Judges iv. 1-9.

[2] *Donec surgeret Debbora, surgeret Mater in Israel.*

A writer of a Homily to be found amongst the works of St. John Chrysostom comments as follows:

> "And even now there is not wanting to God a Debbora, there is not wanting to God a Jael. For if some chance woman obtained a victory, how much more does not the Mother of Christ confound the enemies of the truth? . . . What I have said just now I repeat: Let us beseech Mary, the Holy Glorious Virgin and Mother of God."[2]

8. Ruth. One of the most touching of the Bible stories is the story of Ruth the Moabitess. We can never tire of reading how Naomi in her desolation, after the death of her husband and of her two sons, went back to her own country with her daughters-in-law, Orpha and Ruth, both of whom were childless. "And being now in the way to return into the land of Juda, she said to them: Go ye home to your mothers, the Lord deal mercifully with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. . . . And Orpha kissed her mother-in-law and returned: Ruth stuck close to her mother-in-law. And Naomi said to her, 'Behold thy kinswoman is returned to her people and to her gods, go thou with her.' She answered: 'Be not against me to desire that I should leave thee and depart, for

---

[1] Judges vii. 31.

[2] *De uno legislatore, Hom. De divers, utriusque Test. locis., int. Op. S.J. Chrys.*

whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go, and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell, thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. The land that shall receive thee dying, in the same will I die and there will I be buried. The Lord do so and so to me and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee.' So they went together and came to Bethlehem."[1] Our thoughts travel to another, to the Maiden, who in the after-time also travelled to Bethlehem on a journey that never shall be forgotten. Ruth went to the little town, a stranger, so did Mary Most Holy. If Ruth was not a figure of our Lady's virginity, surely she showed forth the faithfulness of her whom Christians hail in all lands as the *Virgo Fidelis*, the Faithful Virgin. As Ruth cried to her mother, "The Lord do so and so to me and add more also, if aught but death part me and thee," so do we cry to our Lady—with this difference, that we know that not even death can part us from Mary. The Virgin most Faithful will desert us never, neither in this life, nor at the hour of death, nor in the life to come.

We read also that Ruth "found grace in the eyes of the rich man Boaz, who comforted her and spoke to the heart" of her, who "fell on her face and worshipped on the ground and professed herself to be his handmaid."[2] Even so did the Blessed Virgin find grace in the eyes of Heaven, as she worshipped and magnified her God and Saviour, declaring herself the while to be but His lowly Handmaiden.

---

[1] Ruth i. 7-17.

[2] Ruth ii. 10-13.

9. Abigail. If Ruth is a type of the *Virgo Fidelis,* Abigail is a type of the *Virgo Prudens,* who is our Lady. "There was a certain man in the wilderness of Maon, and his possessions were in Carmel and the man was very great. Now the name of the man was Nabal and the name of his wife was Abigail. And she was a prudent and very comely woman, but her husband was churlish and very bad and ill-natured."[1]

Now, when David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep, he sent him, by ten of his young men, a message of friendliness and courtesy. "Go up to Carmel and go to Nabal and salute him in my name with peace." But Nabal, answering the servants of David, said: "Who is David? And what is the son of Jesse? Servants are multiplied nowadays who flee from their masters." When David heard of this insolence, he was angered and said: "Let every man gird on his sword. And David also girded on his sword; and there followed David about four hundred men, and two hundred remained, with the baggage. But one of the servants told Abigail, the wife of Nabal, saying, 'Behold David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master and he rejected them. These men were very good to us and gave us no trouble;

---

[1] 1 Samuel xxv. 2-3.

neither did we ever lose anything all the time that we conversed with them in the desert. They were a wall unto us both by day and by night, all the time that we were with them keeping the sheep. Wherefore consider and think what thou hast to do, for evil is determined against thine husband, and against thine house, and he is the son of Belial so that no man can speak to him.' Then Abigail made haste and took two hundred loaves and two vessels of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and a hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of dry figs, and laid them upon two asses. And she said to her servants: 'Go before me, behold I will follow after you,' but she told not her husband Nabal. And when she had gotten upon an ass, and was coming down to the foot of the mountain, David and his men came over against her, and she met them. And when Abigail saw David, she made haste and lighted off the ass and adored upon the ground. And she fell at his feet and said: 'Upon me let this iniquity be, my lord; let thine handmaid speak, I beseech thee, in thine ears, and hear the words of thy servant. Let not my lord the king, I pray, regard this naughty man, Nabal, for according to his name, he is a fool, and folly is with him: but I, thine handmaid, did not see thy servants, my lord, whom thou sentest. Now therefore, my lord, the Lord liveth, and thy soul liveth, who hath withholden thee from coming to blood. . . . And when the Lord shall have done to thee, my lord, all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have made thee prince over Israel, this shall not be an occasion of grief to thee and a scruple of grief to my lord, that thou hast shed innocent blood, or revenged thyself, and when the Lord shall have done well by my lord, thou shalt remember thine handmaid.' And David said to Abigail: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me, and blessed be thy speech, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me to-day from coming to blood, and revenging me with my own hand.' And David received at her hand all that she had brought him, and said to her: 'Go in peace into thine house, behold I have heard thy voice and have honoured thy face.'"[1]

A strange difficulty is sometimes raised concerning the Parable of the Unjust Steward. It has been objected that our Lord praised the steward on account of his injustice. Nothing can be further from the facts. The steward's earthly master praised him, not for his injustice, but because of his forethought, which in this life secured him comfort in his old age. "The children of light" are warned that they should imitate—not the cunning and dishonesty of the steward—but his careful provision, in securing their eternal happiness. A similar difficulty may be raised when we apply the history of Abigail to the intercession of our Lady. It may be urged that Almighty God knows not the anger which so nearly led King David into sin. Certainly not. Yet, it is agreed that, from certain other points of view, David is a notable type of our Lord. It is also a solemn, awe-inspiring fact that we read in the Holy Scripture of the terrible wrath, which is "the wrath of the Lamb." When, then, as the offence of the fool Nabal moved David to an anger that was excessive, the sins of foolish men move God to that anger which belongs to His Infinite perfections, may the true Abigail arise in her haste and make intercession for her people, so that her Son, moved by her goodness and wisdom, may be able to stay His Hand and give us yet a place unto repentance.

---

[1] 1 Samuel xxv. 4-35.

10. Bethsabee.

King Solomon, the son of David and Bethsabee, in consequence of the wisdom which he received as a special gift from Heaven, is a type of the Everlasting Wisdom, the Son of Mary. Of Bethsabee we read that she entered the Presence Chamber of Solomon to make a request for one who had entreated her to speak for him to the King. "And the king arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat down upon his throne, and a throne was set for the king's mother, and she sat on his right hand. And she said to him: 'I desire one small petition of thee; do not put me to confusion.' And the king said to her: 'My mother, ask, for it is not right that I should turn away thy face.' "[1] Solomon did not always act according to the tenor of his words, but his words are full of the truest wisdom, and as such are recorded in the Holy Scripture. It *is* not right that a son should turn away his mother's face. Jesus, who "has regard to the face of His Saints,"[2] will refuse nothing to His Mother, who once shared the chalice of His sufferings and is now exalted and crowned on "the Throne which is set for the King's Mother on His Right Hand."

11. Judith. In reading the books of Judith and Esther, it is of the first importance to remember their symbolic meaning. In the one book we are told how Judith slew Holofernes, in the other how Esther brought about the destruction of the schemes of Haman and, at least indirectly, brought him to the scaffold. Both Holofernes and Haman signify the power and predominance of evil, destroyed by our Lady through the Incarnation of her Divine Son. In this sense St. Jerome wrote:

> "For me virginity is consecrated in Mary and in Christ. When the Virgin conceived in her womb and brought forth the Child, 'whose government is upon His Shoulders, the Mighty God, the Father of the world to come,'[3] the curse was done away. Death by Eve, Life by Mary. . . . Then it was that the chaste Judith cut off the head of Holofernes.

---

[1] 1 Kings ii. 19, 20.

[2] *Cf.* Judith vi. 15.

[3] Isa. ix. 6.

> Then it was that Haman, which is interpreted *iniquity*, was burned up in his own fire."[1]

Jews, intent merely upon their literal sense, read the books of the Old Testament, which record the protection extended by the Almighty to His people in a barbarous age, where mercy and gentleness were yet unknown; Christians, living under such different conditions, find their key and interpretation in the truths of Christianity, and should read them always in the light shed upon the events which they narrate, by the coming of the Saviour and His most Blessed Mother, whom those events mystically foreshadow on every page. Such is the constant teaching of the Holy Fathers. The mere letter oftentimes killeth; the spirit ever giveth life.

I will now give a brief summary of the Book of Judith, asking my reader to keep his mind fixed, not so much upon the figure of the chaste Judith, as upon that of Mary the Virgin who was prefigured by the story.

"In the thirteenth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, king of the Assyrians, he called together all the ancients, and all the governors, and his officers of war, and communicated to them the secret of his counsel. And he said his thoughts were to bring all the earth under his empire. And when this saying pleased them all, Nebuchadnezzar, the king, called

---

[1] *Epist.* XXII., *Ad Eustochium*, nn. 18, 19.

Holofernes the general of his armies, and said to him: "Go out against all the kingdoms of the west and against them especially that despised my commandment."[1] The result of this order was soon seen when "Holofernes went forth to war, he and all the army, with the chariots and horsemen and archers, who covered the face of the earth like locusts. . . . And he took by assault the renowned city of Melothus . . . and he passed over the Euphrates and came into Mesopotamia . . . and he carried away all the children of Madian and stripped them of all their riches, and all that resisted him he slew with the edge of the sword. And after these things he went down into the plains of Damascus in the days of the harvest, and he set all the corn on fire, and he caused all the trees and vineyards to be cut down."[2]

Undoubtedly Holofernes and his soldiers represented evil in the world. For the moment, great was his triumph. All the kings and princes of vast territories round about "called themselves and their children his servants and submitted to his law,"[3] and Nebuchadnezzar his master declared that he alone was God amongst the nations, brought under his rule by the power of Holofernes his servant.[4]

"Then the children of Israel, who dwelt in the land of Juda, hearing these things were exceedingly afraid of him. Dread and terror seized upon their minds, lest he should do the same to Jerusalem and to the Temple of the Lord, that he had done to other cities and their temples."[1] So they fortified the fastnesses of their mountains and betook themselves with much earnestness to prayer and fasting. When Holofernes heard this he was "transported with exceeding great fury and indignation," and calling an assembly, asked who were this people that dared to resist him and "who was the king of their warfare."[2] In reply he was told their history by "Achior captain of the children of Ammon," who assured him "if there be no offence of this people in the sight of their God, we cannot resist them, because their God would defend them and we shall be a reproach to the whole earth."[3]

---

[1] Judith ii. 1-5.

[2] *Id.* ii. 11-17.

[3] *Id.* iii. 4, 5.

[4] *Id.* iii. 13.

On hearing these words Holofernes and his great men were furiously angry at the very idea that any people existed who could resist their victorious power. Holofernes, therefore, "being in a violent passion," ordered that Achior should be taken and handed over to the children of Israel in Bethulia, that when they were all destroyed "as one man" he might share their fate. Accordingly they "tied him to a tree, hand and foot, and so left him bound with ropes and returned to their master."[4] Achior was rescued and taken into Bethulia, where he was welcomed at a banquet and informed of all that had happened. The next day Holofernes fulfilled his threat and "went up against Bethulia with his army." He proceeded to cut off the supplies of water, and great was the dismay and distress in Bethulia, so that all preparations were made to hand over the city in five days' time to the foe, preferring that their "end might be made short by the edge of the sword, than that it should be made longer by the drought of thirst."[1] Now it came to pass that when Judith, a widow, had heard these words—Judith "who was greatly renowned amongst all because she feared the Lord very much"[2]—she made a long discourse to certain ancients of the people, reminding them of God's goodness to their fathers, and inspiring their hearts with confidence, that if they turned to Him now, He would help them once more in their distress. And they said to her:

---

[1] Judith iv. 1-2.

[2] *Id.* v. 3.

[3] *Id.* v. 25.

[4] *Id.* vi. 1-9.

"All that thou hast said is true. Pray therefore for us, since thou art a holy woman and one fearing God."[3]

Judith, accordingly, shut herself up and prayed aloud to the Lord, reminding Him of His Mercies that were past, and entreating Him to strengthen her arm, that those "who promised themselves to violate God's sanctuary might fall in their wrath," and that the chief enemy "might fall by the hand of a woman."[1] Then she went forth boldly into the very camp of Holofernes, and parleyed with him, not as of old Eve parleyed with Satan, but asserting her power and superiority in the strength of God, who made her "incomparably lovely"[2]—until in the end he was delivered into her hand, and she struck the head off his body, in the stillness of the night, as "he lay upon his bed, fast asleep, being exceedingly drunk."[3] Judith then returned to the city and:

---

[1] Judith vii. 17.

[2] *Id.* viii. 8.

[3] *Id.* viii. 29.

"From afar off cried to the watchman upon the walls: 'Open the gates, for God is with us, who hath shown His Power in Israel . . . and by me His handmaid, He hath fulfilled His Mercy, which He promised to the house of Israel, and He hath slain the enemy of His people by my hand this night.' . . . And Ozias, the prince of the people, said to her: '*Blessed art thou, O daughter, by the Lord the Most High God, above all women upon the earth. Blessed be the Lord who made Heaven and earth, because He hath so magnified thy name this day, that thy praise shall not depart out of the mouth of men who shall be mindful of the power of the Lord for ever, for that thou hast not spared thy life, by reason of the distress and tribulation of thy people, but hast prevented our ruin in the presence of our God.*"[4]

It is that I might, at the end, write down these words and those which are soon coming, that I have told the story of Judith in this book. When first they were uttered all the people said: "*So be it, so be it.*"[1] They are applied by the Church to the Blessed Mother of God, whose praise, too, shall not pass out of the mouth of men, for that she did not spare her life by reason of the distress and tribulation of her children, but—her soul pierced with sorrow—" has prevented our ruin in the presence of our God." Blessed is Judith. Ten thousand times more blessed is Mary. And when our Catholic people hear the praises of our Lady, with one heart and with one voice they all cry out: "*So be it, so be it.*"

---

[1] Judith ix. 11-15.

[2] *Id.* x. 4.

[3] *Id.* xiii. 4.

[4] *Id.* xiii. 18-26.

"Now, when Achior heard what had passed, he fell down at her feet, and reverenced her and said: *Blessed art thou by thy God in every tabernacle of Jacob, for in every nation which shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified by reason of thee.* . . . And Joachim the High Priest came forth from Jerusalem to Bethulia with all his ancients to see Judith, and when she was come out to him, they all blessed her with one voice saying: *Thou art the Glory of Jerusalem, thou art the joy of Israel, thou art the honour of our people,* for thou hast done manfully, and thy heart has been strengthened, because thou hast loved chastity. Therefore also the Hand of the Lord hath strengthened thee, and therefore thou shalt be blessed for ever. And, once again, all the people said: '*So be it, so be it.*'"[2]

---

[1] Judith xiii. 26

[2] *Id.* xiii. 31 xv. 10-12.

12. Esther. In the days when King Assuerus ruled over Persia, the Jews who had been carried into captivity in the days of Nebuchadnezzar were scattered throughout his dominions—living in fear and trembling for their lives. In the capital there dwelt a Jew named Mardochai, together with his beautiful niece Esther, an orphan whom he had brought up from her childhood as his own daughter. Now, it came to pass that Esther found favour in the eyes of Assuerus and was chosen by him to be his Queen. Mardochai, however, thought it prudent to charge her to keep silence as to her relationship with himself, and also as to the fact that she was a Jewess by birth and religion. Meanwhile a certain Haman was advanced by the king over all the princes, so that "all the king's servants that were at the doors of the palace bent their knees and worshipped him."[1] Mardochai, however, steadily refused to render this homage. When on this account he was denounced to the king, he prayed to the Lord, saying: "O Lord, Lord, Thou knowest all things, and Thou knowest that it was not out of pride and contempt, or any desire of glory, that I refused to worship the proud Haman (for I would willingly and readily, for the salvation of Israel, have kissed even the steps of his feet), but I feared lest I should transfer the honour of my God to a man, and lest I should adore anyone except my God."[2] For terrible

---

[1] Esther iii. 1-2.

[2] *Id.* xiii. 9-14.

trouble had already come to Mardochai and his people partly by reason of this refusal, and partly because he had denounced two friends of Haman whom he knew to have conspired to murder the king. Full of rage and wounded pride, Haman obtained from Assuerus a decree sent through "all the hundred and twenty-seven Provinces that were subject to his empire from India to Ethiopia,"[1] ordering that:

"All the Jews should be destroyed, both young and old, little children and women in one day—the thirteenth of the twelfth month—and a spoil be made of their goods, and that none should pity them. And the couriers that were sent hastened to fulfil the king's commandment. And immediately the decree was hung up in Susan, the King and Haman feasting together, and all the Jews that were in the city weeping."[2]

Then Mardochai knew that his whole hope, after God, must be placed in Esther the Queen. He therefore sent her "a copy of the edict that was hanging up in Susan, that she might go to the king and entreat him for her people."[3]

But Esther replied that there was a law which laid down that:

"Whosoever should go into the king's inner court, without being sent for be immediately put to death without any delay, unless the king shall hold out the golden sceptre to him, in token of clemency that so he may live. How then can I go into the king, who for these thirty days have not been called unto him? And when Mardochai had heard this, he sent word to Esther again, saying: "Think not that thou mayest save thy life only, because thou art in the king's house, more than all the Jews. For if thou wilt now hold thy peace, the Jews shall be delivered up on some other occasion, and thou and thy father's house shall perish. And who knoweth but that thou art not therefore come to the kingdom, that thou mightest be ready in such a time as this?"[1]

---

[1] Esther xiii. 1. [2] *Id.* iii. 12-15; xiii. 1-7. [3] *Id.* iv. 8.

Esther, on receiving this appeal, was far indeed from "holding her peace, thinking only of her own safety." After three days' prayer and fasting, she, unsummoned, went boldly to the king, who was for a moment full of wrath, but:

"God changed the king's spirit into mildness, and he caressed her with these words: 'Why Esther, art thou afraid? Thou shalt not die, for *this law is not made for thee, but for all others.* Come near then and touch the sceptre. . . . What wilt thou have done, although thou shalt ask the half of my kingdom, thou shalt have it.'"[2]

Then Queen Esther acknowleged to her lord that Mardochai was her uncle, disclosed the wicked plot of Haman and answered the king: "If I have found favour in thy sight O King, and if it please thee, give me the life for which I ask, and my people for whom I entreat thee. For we are given up, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain and to perish."[1]

---

[1] Esther iv. 11-16.

[2] *Id.* xv. 11-14; vii. 2.

Assuerus, moved by the prayer of Esther, caused investigations to be made, with the result that Haman was hanged on the gibbet he had prepared for Mardochai, the royal edict against the Jews was reversed as publicly as it was made, and their enemies were punished, whilst—

"To the Jews a new light seemed to rise, joy, honour, dancing. And in all peoples, cities and provinces, whithersoever the king's commandments came, there was wonderful rejoicing—feasts and banquets and keeping holy day; inasmuch that many of other nations and religions joined themselves to their worship and ceremonies."[2]

The symbolism of all this to a Catholic is unmistakable, and should never be lost sight of. As Esther pleaded for her people who were under a curse, so too does Mary plead for her sinful children with Him by whom all kings reign. As the sceptre was given to Esther, so has it been given to Mary. As it was said to Esther: "This law was not for thee, but for all others," so is Mary alone exempt from that law of sin which hinders fearless access to God; for Mary Queen of Heaven, immaculate in her conception, sinless in her life, the mother and refuge of God's people, in all her ways is ever well-pleasing to the Most High.

---

[1] Esther viii. 1. ; vii. 3.

[2] *Id.* viii. 16, 17.

Wherever we search in the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, unless our eyes are holden, we shall find our Lady. We shall find her foreshown in the nomadic life of Abraham when Sarah rejoiced at the birth of her son—we shall find her as we watch Rebecca with her pitcher at the well, Rachel loved so dearly by Jacob the herdsman, Miriam her namesake—saving her people from the hosts of Pharaoh—Ruth in the cornfields of Boaz, Abigail so gently turning aside the wrath of David, or Bethsabee seated by Solomon the Wise on the throne belonging to the Mother of the King. Like Debbora of old, Mary is the Mother of Israel. Even as Jael smote Sisera and Judith Holofernes, so has Mary ever fought against the enemies of God's people.[1] Like Esther who found such favour with her spouse, Mary has been favoured above all others by her Lord, that she may intercede for her children and prevail. In the time of our necessity we may venture to remind her—as Mardochai once reminded Esther to such good purpose—that for this reason amongst others, " has she come to her kingdom, that she might be ready in such a time as this."

We find the Holy Mother of God foreshadowed in the Eternal Decrees, together with her Lord, even at the beginnings of the world—for to the

---

[1] Apoc. xii

Mother of God the Church applies the words of the seer:

"Then the Creator of all things commanded and spoke to me, and He that created me rested in my tabernacle. From the beginning, and before the world, was I created, and unto the world to come I shall not cease to be, and in His holy dwelling-place I have ministered before Him. And so was I established in Mount Sion, on the Holy City likewise I rested, and my power was in Jerusalem. And I took root in an honourable people, and in the portion of my God which is His inheritance, and my abode is in the full assembly of the Saints. I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress tree on Mount Sion. I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose-plant in Jericho. As a fair olive-tree in the plains, and as a plane-tree by the water in the streets was I exalted. . . . I am the mother of love and of fear and of knowledge and of holy hope. In me is all the grace of the Way and of the Truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire me and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey and mine inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. *My memory is unto everlasting generations.*"[1]

Yes, we find the coming of Mary our mother, who is also the Virgin Mother of our Lord, anticipated and proclaimed in many a haunting phrase of the sacred writings of the people of God. And her children, wherever they see her gracious figure, shall arise and call her Blessed, crying to her, as Jews of old once cried to Judith—but with love and gratitude and confidence and reverence increased beyond the power of words to say—in proportion as the Reality is greater than the Figure, and the Gospel is richer in blessings than was the Law:

---

[1] Ecclus. xxiv. 12-28.

"Thou art the Glory of Jerusalem; thou art the joy of Israel; thou art the glory of all our people."

CHAPTER XVII

MARY AND THE CHURCH IN TYPE AND PROPHECY

"*Novum fecit Dominus super terram ut Mulier circumdaret Virum, nec alium quam Christum, de quo dicitur: Ecce Vir, Oriens Nomen Eius. Novum quoque fecit in cælo, ut Mulier Sole appareret amicta.*"—S. BERNARDUS.

IT is a great and fruitful principle that the various events recorded in the Old Testament foreshadow the New. Resting on this principle, the Fathers of the Church have discovered countless figures of the Blessed Mother of God scattered throughout the ancient Scriptures of Israel. Before calling the attention of my readers to some of these patristic applications of Jewish history to the Mysteries of Redemption which that history typifies, it may be well to point out that the Fathers held our Lady herself to be a type of the Church, though on occasion they taught also that the Church is a figure of our Lady.

Indeed, the Fathers not seldom merged our Lady and the Church into a unity, treating them as though they were in fact one. For example, St. Clement of Alexandria wrote at the very beginning of the third century:

> "O mystic marvel! One Father of all things, One Word of all things, One and the same everywhere, One only Mother Virgin. *Dear it is to me to call her the Church.*"[1]

And St. Cyril of Alexandria:

> "Hymning with canticles the ever-Virgin Mary and her Son and spotless Spouse."[2]

Such identification as this may strike us as sufficiently strange, until we remember that in truth our Lady, as we see her in the Gospels, is again and again the personification of the Church of Christ. St. Augustine is never tired of urging with regard to St. Peter that he is the *persona* or representative of the Church; from another point of view this is equally true of the Virgin Mother. She stands out as the concrete embodiment of what, outside the borders of Catholicism, is sometimes regarded as a merely abstract conception, and then vaguely called "The Church." From this unmeaning verbiage we are awakened as from an evil dream, when we watch Mary as she is shown us in the Gospels, and remember that she stands for the Church, and points out to the Church (that is, to the men and women who compose the Church) the way in which they too should serve their Lord.

---

[1] *Pædagogus*, Lib. I. 6, P.G., Tom. VIII., p. 301.

[2] Hom. IV., *ad fin.*

There are at least seven ways in which the Blessed Virgin Mary may be seen to represent and typify the Church.

1. St. Augustine in various passages scattered through his writings dwells on the truth that the Church, in this resembling Mary, is a Virgin Mother.

> "He it is," writes the great Doctor, "who is beautiful above the sons of men, the Son of Holy Mary, the Bridegroom of the Holy Church, which he has rendered like to His Mother. For He hath made her for us a mother and hath kept her for Himself a virgin. For to her it is that St. Paul speaks: 'I have joined you as a chaste virgin to Christ.'[1] Of her again he says that our 'mother is not a bondwoman but free,' and that 'the children of her who before was desolate are more in number than of her who has a husband.'[2] Thus also in the case of the Church, as in that of Mary, we find perpetual virginity and incorrupt fecundity. For what Mary merited in her flesh—that the Church has preserved in the spirit."[3]

And again:

> "The Church . . . imitating Christ's Mother, every day gives birth to His Members and remains a Virgin."[4]

---

[1] 2 Cor. xi. 2.

[2] Gal. iv. 26, 27.

[3] Serm. CLXXXIX., a. l., *de Temp.*, xii.

[4] *Enchirid. ad Laurentium,* cap. xxxiv. *Cf.* Ep. cxxxvii., *ad Volusian.*

And once more:

> "Mary brought forth your Head; the Church brought forth you. For the Church too is both Mother and Virgin—Mother by the bowels of charity, Virgin by the integrity of faith and by piety. She brings forth the peoples: but they are members of One, whose body and spouse she is herself. In this too she resembles the Virgin, that she also, whilst bearing many, is the Mother of Unity" [*i.e.*, Mary is the Mother of many, yet but of One only.][1]

The Holy Virgin, bearing Christ, bore us also who are the members of Christ; the Holy Church, remaining also virgin by the integrity of her Faith, has borne us her children, making us, by our spiritual birth in Baptism, the children of God. Yet, the One Church remains "the Mother of Unity"—for all her children are united in the One Faith. The children of God who are one with Christ are the children of their Mother Mary, who bore but one Son and is the Spouse of the Spirit; they are also the children of their Mother the Church, the Mother of Unity and—like the Holy Virgin—the mystical Bride of the Lord.

The great meeting-place between our Lady and the Church is to be found in the virginal fruitfulness—in the Motherhood—of each.

> "The Church," writes Auguste Nicholas, "is the expansion of the Motherhood of Mary; it is the mystical womb of Mary which gives birth to the mystical Body of Christ."[2]

---

[1] Serm. CXCII., *In Nat. Dom.*, ix. 2.

[2] *La Vierge Marie.*

2. Both our Lady and the Church are rightly called, under God, the sinners' refuge and the repentant sinners' home. The tenderness of the heart of Mary beats responsively to the gentleness of the Church of Jesus Christ.

3. After her divine Childbearing the Blessed Virgin devoted herself to the care and worship of the Incarnate Lord, whose Godhead was hidden by the swathing-bands of Infancy; the Church is given over to the care and worship of the same Lord, hidden now, both in Godhead and Humanity, beneath the white veils of the Blessed Sacrament.

"Oh, the new order of things," exclaims St. Zeno, "constrained by love for His image to become an Infant, God cries; and He who was come to loose the debts of the whole world suffers Himself to be bound in swathing-bands. He is laid in the manger of the stable, to show that He is the Shepherd and the Food of the nations."[1]

At Bethlehem, which being interpreted from the Hebrew signifies *the House of Bread*, Mary showed Jesus to the Shepherds and the Kings; the Church is ever showing Jesus to His people.

4. With Jesus, Mary fled into Egypt; the Church ever shares the persecutions and sufferings of her Lord.

5. An ancient writer observes that Mary kept the words of Christ in her heart, as "one who is the

---

[1] Lib. II., *Tractatus*, viii. et ix.

receptacle of all the mysteries";[1] Such a home of Divine Mysteries is also the holy Church. And if Mary not only kept the words of her Lord, but pondered them as well—that is, turned them over in her heart—in this she represented our Mother the Church—ever meditating the words of her Saviour, recorded in the Gospels, comparing them one with another, regarding them now in this aspect, now in that, never weary of repeating them in the Sacred Liturgy for the edification of her children.

6. Again, when Mary speaks, we can hear the Church speaking in every age. "Behold the Handmaiden of the Lord," said Mary, but the Church too is the Handmaiden of her Lord.[2] "Be it done unto me according to Thy word," are Mary's words, foreshowing the attitude of the Church in every age towards her Divine Master. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do ye," was Mary's bidding to the waiters of old; none other is the constant command of the Church to all her servants.

---

[1] Hom. III., *De Annuntiat. inter op. S. Gregorii Thaumat.*

[2] On Psalm lxxxv. 16—"*Save the son of Thine Handmaid*"—St. Augustine wrote (*Enarratio in Ps. lxxxv.*): "The Lord was Son of a Handmaid. What Handmaid? The same who, on His being announced to her, as to be born of her, made answer, saying: *Behold the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word.*" But on Psalm cxv. 16—"*I am Thy servant and the Son of Thine Handmaid*"—we find him commenting (*Id., In Ps. cxv.* 16): "He is the Son of the Heavenly Jerusalem [the Church], which is above—the free mother of us all."

"Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing;" such too is the loving complaint of the Church to her Beloved in the hour of sorrow and darkness.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord." In the second century, St. Irenæus wrote that in these words we hear Mary "crying out and prophesying on behalf of the Church."[1] In all truth as day by day the Holy Church lifts the *Magnificat*, like incense, before the Throne of the Most High, all generations arise and call her blessed, together with Mary, Virgin and Mother.

7. It is above all at Cana that we may observe the close identification, in God's purposes for our salvation, of His Mother with His Church. Our Lady's intervention at the Marriage Feast belonged to "the beginning of signs" and is typical of the Church's part in the administration of the Sacraments. Once more, at Cana Mary prays. This is the great office of the Church. For this reason is it that in the earliest Christian pictures to be found in the Roman Catacombs we find especially two figures—the Good Shepherd and the Blessed Virgin. Our Lady however, is depicted not, as in later times, with her Child in her arms, but as a woman in the attitude of prayer.[2] Under this figure we may also

---

[1] *Hær.*, L. III., c. x., n. 2.

[2] Our Lady is represented in this manner, with three Apostles on either side, in a fifth-century painting still to be seen on a wall of the ruined Coptic monastery of St. Simeon near Assouan in Upper Egypt.

recognise the Church.[1] For this reason in an Epithalamium, or marriage song, composed by St. Paulinus of Nola, a friend and contemporary of St. Augustine, we find it laid down that the bridegroom should be to his bride that which Christ is to the Church. The Saint goes on to declare that, if such be the case, Jesus will once again assist at the wedding as at Cana, and that Mary, the Lord's Virgin Mother, will also be present with the spouses, for Mary is the Model of the Church, which is the Bride of the Lord and mother of all the Faithful.[2]

Types of our Lady are often also types of the Church.

We shall not therefore be surprised if even the most definite of all types and figures and prophecies concerning our Lady may be applied in a true sense to the Church. "Behold a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, His Name shall be called Emmanuel."[3] Emmanuel, God with us, is born not only of His Blessed Mother, but also anew each day, in the Holy Mass, in the true House of Bread of which Bethlehem was a figure. Again, our Mother the Church gives birth to Christ not only upon her altars but also in her members, constantly regenerated of water and the Holy Ghost.

But the converse is equally true. There is little that is said in Holy Scripture concerning the Church of God that is not also true of the Mother of God. The Church is the Temple, the Bride, the House of God—so too is His Blessed Mother.

---

[1] *Cf. Roma Soterranea,* vol. ii., pp. 134-143. In these very early pictures we also find St. Peter represented as the Christian Moses.

[2] Poem XXV., 142-175, P.L., Tom. LXI., pp. 633-638.

[3] Isa. vii. 14.

What is true of the Church is also true of our Lady.

The Church—full of grace, as was Mary, and, like Mary, filled with the Holy Spirit—is the heir of the Promises of Christ. Of all Christian people, taught of God in His Holy Church, it was written:

"I will give to them in My House and within My Walls a place and a name better than sons and daughters. I will give them an everlasting name and they shall not fail."[1]

On these words St. Ambrose comments:

> "God promises to others that they shall not fail; and will He suffer His Mother to fail? Mary does not fail."[2]

On occasion the Fathers, when writing of the Church, seem almost to go out of their way to introduce, where we expect it least, the name of the Blessed Mother of God, as though they were anxious that never for one moment should her memory be forgotten. Sometimes, moreover, as we are reading about the Holy Church, the thought of our Lady will rush unbidden to the mind. When the Apostle writes of the Church of Christ as "glorious, without spot or stain or any such thing," who will refrain from forming the picture of Mary in his heart? Truly "glorious things are said of thee, O thou holy City of God."

---

[1] Isa. lvi. 5.

[1] *De Instit. Virg.*, vi. 45.

Identification of our Lady and the Church in Holy Scripture.

It will not therefore surprise us to find that in many of the mystical portions of the Holy Scriptures it is impossible to say whether certain passages refer primarily to our Lady or to the Church. It is certain that they can be applied to both, and that they have been actually applied to both by the Fathers. This is true especially of the Canticle of Canticles.

This mysterious song commences with the words: "*Let Him kiss me with the kiss of His Mouth.*"[1]

> "Hereby," writes St. Ambrose, "is signified the grace of the Holy Spirit coming down from above, as the angel said to Mary: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee;'"[2] but elsewhere he observes: "The Church ceases not to kiss the feet of Christ, and hence in the Canticle of Canticles she is not content with one but many kisses, for like Holy Mary she is intent on all His utterances."[3]

On the words to be found in the next verse: "*Thy Name is as oil poured out,*"[4] St. Ambrose observes:

> "With this ointment it was that Mary was anointed. As a Virgin she conceived, and as a

---

[1] Cant. Cant. i. 1.

[2] *In Ps. cxviii.*, Serm. II., n. 16.

[3] Ep. xli. 18.

[4] Cant. i. 2.

> Virgin she brought forth a good odour, even the Son of God."[1] But with this same ointment is the Church anointed by the Holy Ghost, for she is the Body of Christ, the anointed Priest of God.

"*I am the flower of the field and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.*"[2] Here the Fathers see the Immaculate Virgin; but if we turn once more to St. Ambrose we shall be reminded:

> "Well too is this flower the Church, since she announces the fruit, even the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom it was said to Mary, 'Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb.'"[3]

"*Behold He cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping over the hills.*"[4]

> "Upon souls of greater grace He leaps, over souls of lesser grace He skips. In what way comes He leaping? It was, so to say, with a leap He came into the world; He was with the Father, He came to the Virgin."[5]

These are the words of St. Ambrose, but we may feel sure that instead of "*the Virgin*" the holy Doctor, had his thoughts been running at the time in a slightly different direction, might easily have written "*the Church.*"

"*Arise, make haste, My love, My dove, My beautiful*

---

[1] *In Ps. cxviii.*, Serm. III., 8.

[2] Cant. ii. 1, 2.

[3] *In Ps. cxviii.*, Serm. V., 12.

[4] Cant. ii. 8.

[5] *In Isaac et Anima*, iv. 31. *Cf.* Serm. VI. 6.

One, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. Thou art altogether beautiful, O my love, and there is no stain in thee. Come from Libanus, my spouse.[1] *Who is she that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense, and of all the powders of the perfumer?*[2] *Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the star, terrible as an army set in battle array?*"[3] It seems that our Lady is primarily depicted by these figures, but they may all be applied without undue violence to the Church.

Types of our Lady which may be applied to the Church.

I will now bring together three striking metaphors all applied by the Fathers to the Blessed Mother of God, but which can be applied also to the Holy Church.

1. "*Behold threescore valiant ones of the most valiant of all Israel surrounded the Bed of Solomon.*"[4]

> "Rejoice, thou entirely immaculate Throne of God, Thou glorious only Mother of God: Rejoice thou most holy Bed of Solomon."

Thus wrote St. Ephrem,[5] but the Bed of Solomon is also the Church surrounded by the Armies of the Lord of Hosts.

2. "*Go forth and see King Solomon in the crown wherewith His Mother crowned Him in the day of His Espousals and in the day of the joy of His Heart.*"[6]

---

[1] Cant. Cant. ii., 11, 12; iv. 7, 8.

[2] *Id.*, iii. 6.

[3] *Id.*, v. 9.

[4] *Id.*, iii. 7.

[5] *Orat. in Deip. Op. Græc.*, Tom. III., p. 535.

[6] Cant. iii. 11.

> "Let Thy Mother adore Thee and place upon Thy Head the ornaments of the diadem, as his mother of old placed upon King Solomon those that were his," wrote St. Ephrem.[1]

And St. Ambrose:

> "Blessed Mother Jerusalem, and Blessed Womb of Mary which crowned so great a Lord."[2]

3. "*My sister, My Spouse is a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up.*"[3] These words are understood by the Fathers of the Virginity of our Lady. Thus, St. Jerome:

> "In being closed and sealed the garden and the fountain are like the Mother of the Lord, Mother and Virgin."[4]

They are also often applied to the Unity of the Church,[5] as are the sentences that will follow shortly: "*O My sister, My spouse, open to Me, My Sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled,*"[6] and again: "*One is My dove, My perfect one is but one.*"[7]

The whole of this wonderful Epithalamium—fragrant with Oriental tenderness — celebrates triumphantly the love of the Lord for His Mother and also for His Church.

Exclusive types of our Lady.

Our Lady and more especially her virginity are understood by the Fathers to be typified exclusively by—amongst other types:

---

[1] *De divers.*, Serm. I.
[2] *De Inst. Virg.*, xvi. 97.
[3] Cant. Cant. iv. 12.
[4] *Adv. Jovin.*, i. 31.
[5] *Cf.* St. Cyprian and St. Optatus, *passim.*
[6] Cant. Cant. v. 1, 2.
[7] *Id.*, vi. 8.

1. *The Paradise of Eden, the virginal soil, the earth that produced Adam, the untilled ground.*[1]

Mary is symbolised in the Paradise, where for a short time sin was yet unknown, by the virgin earth from which God formed the body of the first Adam.

For example St. John Chrysostom writes:

> "The word Eden signifies virgin land. Now, such was the region in which God planted Paradise. For it is written that God planted a Paradise in Eden towards the East,[2] that thou mayest understand that Paradise was not a work of human hands; since the earth was virgin, and had known no ploughshare, nor was it cut up by furrows; but without tillage—at the Divine command alone it put forth its vegetation and trees. For this cause He called it Eden, which means virgin soil. This virgin earth is a type of the Virgin. For as that land, without having received any seed, blossomed forth for us Paradise; so too Mary, without having conceived of man, blossomed forth for us Christ. When then a Jew says to thee: How did a Virgin bring forth? say to him: How did the virgin earth put forth those marvellous trees?"[3]
>
> And on the words: "A spring rose out of the earth, watering all the face of the earth," St. Augustine writes: "The face of the earth, that is the dignity of the earth, whereby is most rightly understood the Mother of the Lord, Mary the Virgin, whom the Holy Spirit watered."[4]

---

[1] *Cf.* Gen. ii. [2] Gen. ii. 8 (according to the Septuagint).

[3] *De Mutatione Nominum*, ii.

[4] *De Genesi*, Lib. II. *Cf.* St. Irenæus, *Hær.*, Lib. III., cap. xxi., 10; St. Ephrem, *Orat. ad Deip.*

And St. Theodotus of Ancyra in a prayer read at the Council of Ephesus:

> "O earth unsown, that put forth the fruit of salvation. O Virgin, who surpassed even the Paradise of pleasure itself. For it indeed produced the growth of vegetation from the plants that sprang up from virginal earth; but this Virgin is that better earth which brought not forth trees bearing apples, but the Rod of Jesse, bringing to men the fruits of salvation . . . of this Virgin the Creator Himself was the Offspring . . . more glorious than Paradise was the Virgin."[1]

2. *The Thirsty Ground* of which we read in Isaiah: "*He shall grow up as a tender plant before Him, and as a root out of thirsty ground.*"[2] On these words St. Ephrem comments:

> "He poured forth dew upon Mary, the thirsty earth."[3]

And St. Jerome:

> "Symmachus interprets the Hebrew word instead of *virgultum* (a plant) *ramus* (a branch) in order to show the Humanity assumed by the Divine Word which came forth from the Virgin's womb, whereof He says: 'As a root out of thirsty ground.' Aquila instead of *sitiens* (thirsty) reads *invia* (pathless), without way, untrodden, to denote the privilege of Mary's virginity."[4]

---

[1] *Orat. in Nativ. Domini*, I.

[2] Isa. liii. 2.

[3] *Comment. in Loc.* (Lamy, vol. ii., p. 145), and Hymn II., *De Epiphania* (*Id.*).

[4] *Comment. in Prophet.*, Lib. XIV., *in loc.*

3. *The Burning Bush.*

"*And the Lord appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a Bush: and he saw that the Bush was on fire and was not burned.*"[1]

> "Dost thou not, in the Burning Bush, recognise Mary?" asks St. Theodotus of Ancyra.[2]

St. Proclus calls Mary:

> "The animated Bush of nature, which the fire of the Divine Childbirth did not consume."[3]

And St. Ephrem writes:

> "In the fire Moses saw thy beauty in shadow, O daughter of David, in whose bosom dwelt the Flame, and thou wert not consumed, O Mother of God who art full of grace."[4]

4 and 5. *The Rod of Aaron*[5] *and of Jesse.*[6]

St. Cyril of Jerusalem writes:[7]

> "Thou art the blossoming Rod of Aaron. For truly thou wert the Rod and thy Son the Flower, since from the root of David and Solomon budded forth Christ, our Creator, Almighty God and Lord, the alone Most High; thou art the Mother of Him who is God and Man—Virgin before birth, Virgin at birth, and Virgin after birth."

St. Ambrose writes:[8]

> "*There shall come forth a Rod out of the root of Jesse, and a Flower shall rise up out of his root,*" for the

---

[1] Exodus iii. 2.

[2] Hom., *In Salvat. Nat.*

[3] *Orat de Laudibus Mariæ*, i., P.G., Tom. LXV.

[4] *Op. Syr.*, T. III., p. 605.

[5] Numbers xvii. 8.

[6] Isa. xi. 1.

[7] *Cat.* xii. 27.

[8] *Exposit. in Luc.*, i. 42.

root is the family of the Jews, the Rod is Mary, the Flower is Mary's Christ."

6. *Gideon's Fleece.*[1]

Thus St. Ephrem:

> "The fleece of Gideon, in that it was a receptacle for the dew of Heaven, has prefigured the Virgin, in whom the Word was made Flesh."[2]

And St. Proclus:

> "Mary the holy Virgin, Mother of God . . . the most pure fleece watered by rain from Heaven with which the Shepherd clothes His sheep."[3]
>
> "Rightly is Mary compared to a fleece, because from her Fruit garments of salvation are woven for the peoples. Clearly Mary is the fleece, since it was from her tender bosom that the Lamb came forth, who Himself too weaving His Mother's wool, that is to say her flesh, covers with a soft fleece the wounds of all the peoples. For every wound of sin is suffused with the wool of Christ, and is clothed with the garment of Christ, that it may be healed."[4]

7. *The Cloud that bore the Lord into Egypt.*

"*Behold the Lord will ascend upon a light cloud, and will enter into Egypt, and the idols of Egypt shall be*

---

[1] Judges vi. 37-40. *Cf.* Ps. lxx., 1, 6.

[2] *A Rhythm against the Jews,* n. 11.

[3] *Orat. de Laudibus S. Mariæ,* i.

[4] *Serm. V., Inter opera S. Ambrosii.* This sermon is not by St. Ambrose, though found amongst his works. But the Benedictine Editors say that, without controversy, the words here quoted are taken from the commentary by St. Ambrose on Ps. lxxi.

moved at His Presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst thereof."[1]

> "This," writes St. Ephrem, "is understood of our Lord who, when He appeared as Man in the world, was carried as if upon a light cloud, upon the arms of the Virgin into Egypt,"[2] and again: "The cloud on which the Lord rode is a type of the Mother of God, Mary the Virgin."[3]

St. Ambrose gives us the same explanation in various passages of his writings. For example:

> "The prophet here foretells that the Lord would come into Egypt, that is, to His afflicted world, on the Virgin. He called Mary a *cloud,* because she was of flesh; and *light,* because she was a Virgin, not burdened by the burdens of marriage. She is also the rod that blossomed into flower,[4] because she was pure, and her virginity she directed with a free heart to God, and was not turned away by the distractions of worldly cares. Therefore it was that from the Cross the Lord gave her to St. John, His most beloved disciple, who had said to his father and mother: "I know you not,"[5] and, when called by Christ, left his own father to follow the Word.[6] To such a one is the Virgin given, who knows not his own; to such a one is the Virgin given, who drinks in Wisdom from the breast of Christ; to such a one is the Virgin given, who recognises not his brethren, and knows not his children."[7]

---

[1] Isa. xix. 1.

[2] *In loco.*

[3] *In Jerem.*, xliv.

[4] Numb. xvii. 3.

[5] Deut. xxxiii. 9.

[6] Matt. iv. 21.

[7] *Exhortatio Virgin.*, v. 31-33. *Cf.* vi. 34, 36; *In Ps. cxviii.*, Serm. V., 3, 4; *De Inst. Virg.*, xiii., 81, 82.

8. *The Ark of the Covenant.*

In the Litany of our Lady the Church invokes Mary as *Fœderis arca*—in this following the example of St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Maximus of Turin and many other Fathers. And surely with reason, for the Ark made of precious and incorruptible woods containing the tables of the Law and the Manna of the desert, which was regarded as the Seat of God and the safeguard of the children of Israel, brings before our mind the Holy Virgin, immaculate and incorrupt, who bore within her womb not merely the Tables of the Law but the Divine Legislator Himself, the living Bread that came down from Heaven; who is the Tabernacle of the Godhead and the protection of Christian people. *Fœderis arca: auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.*

9. *The Eastern Gate,* of which the Lord said to Ezechiel: "*This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened and no man shall pass through it, because the Lord the God of Israel hath entered in by it, and it shall be shut for the Prince.*"[1]

> "What is this gate but Mary?" asks St. Ambrose. "And it was shut because Mary is a Virgin. Mary, then, is the gate through which Christ came into this world. . . . He came forth from the Virgin, whose sublimity is such that the world is unable to sustain it. A good gate is Mary, that was closed and was not opened. . . . This gate looked towards the East, since it shed forth the true Light, gave

---

[1] Ezechiel xliv. 1-3.

> birth to the Orient, and brought forth the Sun of Justice."[1]

And St. Jerome:

> "Christ is a Virgin, and the Mother of this One Virgin is herself a perpetual Virgin, Mother and Virgin. . . . She is the Eastern Gate of which Ezechiel speaks, always shut and full of light, which, closing on itself, lets pass the Holy of Holies, whereby the Sun of Justice, even our High Priest, according to the Order of Melchisedech, enters in and goes out."[2]

In a sermon preached before the Bishops at the Council of Ephesus, St. Proclus spoke as follows:

> "I see the miracles [of Christ] and proclaim His Godhead. I see the sufferings [of Christ] and deny not His Manhood. But Emmanuel would, as Man, have opened the gates of Nature, but, as God, He burst not the bars of Virginity. . . . '*And the gate shall be shut.*' Behold a clear demonstration of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. Silenced therefore be all contradictions. And let us be enlightened with the knowledge of the Scriptures, that we may obtain the Kingdom of Heaven for ever and ever, Amen."[3]

Types of the Church which may be applied to our Lady.

Two well-known types of the Church, according to the teaching of the Fathers, are to be found in the ark of Noah, whose inmates were saved from the prevailing destruction, and the mountain of which we read in the Prophet Isaiah: "*In the last days the mountain of the House of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.*"[1] But both are also applied to our Lady.

---

[1] *De Instit. Virg.*, vii. 52-56.

[2] Epist. xlviii. 21, P.L., 22, p. 510.

[3] *Ap Mercat*, ii. p. 24.

The ark from two different points of view is regarded as typical of Mary. For example, St. Proclus writes:

> "Noe formed his ark of incorruptible woods, but Christ, the spiritual Noe, made for Himself the ark of His Body from the incorrupt Mary."[2]

And St. Ephrem exclaims:

> "O Mary, sacred ark, whereby we are saved from the deluge of sin."[3]

With reference to "the mountain of the House of the Lord to be prepared on the top of mountains," St. Gregory the Great (or perhaps his disciple Claudius using materials collected by St. Gregory) wrote:

> "Under the name of this mountain may also be signified the most Blessed ever-Virgin Mary Mother of God; since a mountain was she, who by the dignity of the choice that God made of her transcended all heights of others who have been chosen. Is not Mary a lofty mountain, who, to reach the Conception of the Eternal Word, raised the summit of her merits above all the choirs of angels, even

---

[1] Isaiah ii. 2.

[2] *Oratio VII. in S. Theophania.*

[3] *Prec.*, iv., *Opp. Gr.*, Tom. III., p. 529.

> to the Throne of the Godhead. Isaiah, prophesying of the all-surpassing dignity of this mountain, says: 'In the last days the mountain of the House of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains.' She was indeed the mountain on the top of the mountains, because the height of Mary shone forth above all the Saints."[1]

The Vision of the Woman in the Apocalypse.

The identification of our Lady with the Church in the interpretation of Scriptural symbolism is not confined to the Old Testament. In a gorgeous Vision granted to the beloved Disciple on the Isle of Patmos there appeared before his eyes: "*a great wonder*[2] *in Heaven; A woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars . . . and there appeared another wonder in Heaven, and behold a great Dragon . . . and the woman brought forth a Man-Child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron.*"[3] At first sight it seems clear that here is represented the Blessed Mother of God, clothed with the sun of justice, the moon—that is the earth—beneath her feet, crowned as Queen of the Apostles, the Woman who brought forth the Man-Child that was to rule all the nations of the world. Yet already in the third century—in the first commentaries on this passage of which we have any knowledge—we find at once a divergence of view. St. Victorinus, Bishop of Petau, understands the Woman literally of Mary and only mystically of Church,[1] whereas his contemporary St. Methodius takes the opposite view, combating the opinion that the Childbirth was that of our Lord from Mary, on the somewhat strange ground that this had already taken place, whilst the Vision was of the future. By the Woman, therefore, he understands the Church, and by the Man-Child the Faithful regenerated in Baptism.[2] In the fifth century, however, we find a writer whose works are to be found amongst those of St. Augustine,[3] interpreting the Vision as follows:

---

[1] *Exposit. in Libros Regum.*, *In I. Reg.*, i.

[2] Not τέρας (*sign*), but σημεῖον, a word often used for *miracle* in the N.T. (*cf.* Matt. xii. 38; Mark xiii. 22; John ii. 11, 18, etc.). It is here translated *wonder* in the A.V. The Vulgate has *signum*, and the Douay Version translates thence literally *sign*, which does not convey the full meaning of the original (*cf.* p. 228).

[3] Apoc. xii. 1-5.

> "None of you is ignorant that by the Woman is signified Mary the Virgin, who herself all pure gave birth to our all-pure Head—who also in her own person showed forth a figure of the Holy Church. For just as she, in giving birth to her Son, still remained a virgin, so too does the Church in all time give birth to His members without losing her virginity."[4]

For my part I am inclined to think that both the idea of Mary and that of the Church were before the mind of the Seer of Patmos. The words: "*She being with child, cried, travailing in birth and pained to be delivered,*"[1] are not verified in the painless childbearing of Mary at Bethlehem. They were, however, fulfilled beneath the Cross when the Mother of Sorrows travailed in bitter pain at the birth of the holy Church, which in her turn, with anxiety of heart as to that which may be their future lot, gives to her children birth anew in water and the Holy Ghost.

---

[1] *De Christo et Antichristo*, vol. xviii., p. 427.

[2] *Conviv. dec. Virg.*, Orat. VIII. 7, 8.

[3] From internal evidence it is clear that this writer is a contemporary of St. Augustine.

[4] *De Symb. ad Catech. IV. in op. S. August.*

"*And the Dragon stood before the Woman who was ready to be delivered, that when she was delivered, he might devour her Son.*"[2]

In an exposition of the Apocalypse to be found amongst the works of St. Ambrose, we read as follows:

> "By the Woman here we may also understand the Blessed Virgin Mary. . . . The Dragon stood before the Woman, that on her giving birth he might devour her Son, because at the outset of Christ's Birth, the Dragon had intention of slaying Him by Herod his minister. He stands also before the Woman, that is to say the Church, in order to destroy by temptation to evil those whom by Baptism she brings forth to God."[3]

The rest of the vision is true both of the Blessed Virgin and of the Church. *And the Dragon was wroth with the Woman and went to make war with*

---

[1] Apoc. xii. 2.

[2] *Id.* xii. 4.

[3] *Expositio Apocalypsis inter op. S. Ambrosii.*

the best of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."[1] Those who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ are "the seed," or children, both of Mary and of the Holy Church.

If, indeed, as we are told in the note on the passage in the Douay Bible, the immediate sense refers to the Church, then, as in so many other cases, Mary stands for and represents the Church. But that the direct and primary reference is to our Lady will, I think, hardly be doubted, if we read the whole passage in the light of the primeval prophecy, of which it undoubtedly shows forth the fulfilment. After the Fall came the solemn declaration of the Almighty to Satan, the foe of man: "*I will set enmities between thee and the Woman, between thy seed and her seed.*"[2] At the close of the Sacred Canon we are shown the accomplishment of this great prophecy, as the panorama of the Church's conflict is unrolled before our eyes. On the one side are ranged Satan and his seed—the fallen Spirits; on the other side stands Mary, the Woman of the prophecy, the Man-Child who shall rule the nations, caught up to Heaven,[3] but still our heavenly Captain in the fight, and the rest of Mary's seed, the brothers and sisters of her Son. If you will, the Church is typified—but surely Mary is shown in her own person—Mary our Queen and our Mother, a wonder in Heaven—Mary so dear to St. John with whom he had dwelt in the days of her lowliness, whom now he saw again, all-beautiful and glorified, clothed with the sun—clothed with God—with the moon under her feet, reigning over the earth in the power of Him who rules all nations as their Lord and King, and shall rule them to the end. In its first page the Bible begins with the promise of Mary. In its last pages the Bible shows us Mary, her life-work done, combating by the side of her children still in conflict upon the earth—herself triumphant in the skies.

---

[1] Apoc. xii. 17.

[2] Gen. iii. 15.

[3] Apoc. xii. 5.

CHAPTER XVIII

MARY AND EPHESUS

Mother—Maid all-holy,
  Throned upon thy knee,
Evermore the Almighty
  Child and Lord we see.
While with awe thou gazest
  On the wondrous Face—
Blest among all women,
  Mary, full of grace.

* * * * *

Now, through rest translated
  To the realm assigned,
Crowned with grace we greet thee,
  Crown of human kind.
Yet through all the ages,
  Throned upon thy knee,
Mother-Maid, the Almighty
  Child and Lord we see.

FRANCIS PALGRAVE : *Virgini Deiparæ.*

CATHOLIC Christianity offers to men a double gift: certainty of faith and purity of morals. When Christianity was first given to the world, the turpitude of moral relaxation had become indescribable by a Christian pen. Suffice it to say that the most horrible excesses were glorified by forming part of the worship of deities who were supposed to delight in the extremes of human depravity. Not merely was there no positive ethical standard, but what passed under the name of religion pandered to the grossness of vilest human corruption. Of all this apotheosis of evil the Temple of Diana at Ephesus in its richness and licence and abandonment to lustfulness was for centuries the outward and, as it seemed, the victorious symbol.

It is the glory of Christianity from its earliest days to have condemned evil unflinchingly; it is the boast of Christianity to have raised without compromise the standard of purity, and, far from yielding, like Paganism and Mohammedanism, to the weakness of mankind, to have proclaimed aloud the truth that the grace of God is always at hand, and always suffices those who would keep His Law. Now, as Diana of the Ephesians stood of old for literally the deification of impurity, so all along the Christian ages Mary of Nazareth has been the strength and consolation and ideal of those who would reach after that which is beautiful and good. Even as the worship of Diana plunged men and women deeper and deeper into the mire, so has the worship of Mary raised them to the Heavens where the angels are ranged around the Throne of God.

When St. Paul first entered Ephesus to preach the Gospel, the name of Mary was there unknown,

Ephesus and its goddess.

but Diana reigned supreme. "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" was the cry of "Demetrius the silversmith, who made silver temples for Diana, bringing no small gain to the craftsman," in his panic lest through the Apostle's denunciation of idolatry, "her majesty shall begin to be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth."[1]

The Temple of Diana at Ephesus was held to be one of the seven wonders of the world. Built by extraordinary architectural skill upon a morass, it was a hundred and four metres wide, its façade fifty metres in extent. Each of the twenty-seven pillars of its colonnade was the gift of a king; within its walls were to be found works of the great Greek sculptors, Polycletus, Praxiteles and Phidias, whilst here was to be seen the masterpiece of Apelles—the statue of Alexander with the thunderbolt in its hand. The Romans had declared its inviolability—on ancient medals we may read the inscription *Artemis Ephesia inviolabilis.* The inviolability of the goddess and of her temple was assured by every human title. Yet against Diana and all her works the Apostle of Christ declared open war. As is so often the case, magical arts were found at Ephesus to be joined to superstition and impurity. These arts God's servant denounced, whilst visible sanction from on high was accorded to his words.

"God wrought by the hands of Paul more than common miracles, so that there were brought from his body to the sick handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them and the wicked spirits went out of them . . . and many of them who had followed curious arts brought together their books and burnt them before all, and counting the price of them they found the money to be fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and was confirmed."[1]

---

[1] Acts xix. 24-27.

Still, the worship of the goddess was not yet overthrown. "For two hours" the people cried out again "with one voice: Great is Diana of the Ephesians," and when at length the "town-clerk had appeased the multitude," he thought it prudent to remind them that their superstitions were still safe: "Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great Diana and of Jupiter's offspring?"[2] What wonder, then, if in later years writing to the Corinthians the Apostle should have recalled the memory of the three years he passed amongst these Ephesians with the striking words: "According to men, I fought with beasts at Ephesus."[3]

After St. Paul had left Ephesus, tradition tells us that St. Timothy was for a short time its Bishop, suffering martyrdom at the end of one of the licentious processions of the worshippers of Diana. St. John the Evangelist spent his last years at Ephesus as its Bishop. It is generally thought that a small chapel (built on a hill, facing the Temple) dedicated to the Mother of God was commenced during his Episcopate.

---

[1] Acts xix. 11-20. [2] Acts xix. 34, 35. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 32.

Our Lady at Ephesus.

There would seem to be little doubt that our Lady spent at least some time at Ephesus.[1] Mary most Holy, the Virgin of all virgins, whom the Church hails as the Tower of Ivory, and "the Tower of David, which is built with bulwarks —a thousand bucklers hang upon it, all the armour of valiant men"[2]—must have looked upon that Temple against which she and all her servants, valiant men, armed in her service even with a thousand bucklers, were to wage undying warfare. And soon it was to fall, and be but a memory upon the earth. Tacitus tells us of an earthquake which shook Ephesus to its foundations. The town changed its character, as its port became once more little more than a morass. Houses, theatres, temples, all were abandoned.[3] The great home of the goddess, once proudly declaring itself inviolable, was left without guards, and pillaged by the Goths in 263. Constantine rased it to the ground, and sent its marbles to Constantinople. The glory of Diana of the Ephesians had departed. Meanwhile the church raised on the hill in honour of the Virgin Mother had gradually grown to the dimensions of a Basilica,

Decay of Ephesus.

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 20.

[2] Cant. iv. 4.

[3] *St. Paul*, par l'Abbé Fouard, p. 256.

and, when Nestorius first preached his heresy, was ready, in the Providence of God, for the sessions of the Ecumenical Council which was to preserve intact, for all ages to come, the Faith once delivered to the Saints, by vindicating Mary's title to the sublime estate of true Mother of the Incarnate Word.

Nestorius.

Nestorius was a man of extreme rigour of life and disposition. When he first comes before our notice as Patriarch of Constantinople, we find him leading an ascetic life, living almost entirely amongst his books, but mercilessly harsh in his dealings with the Arians against whom he waged implacable war. Given over to pride and love of novelty, he was soon to fall into a heresy as fatal to the true Faith concerning the Incarnation as the heresy of Arius himself. Arius had denied that the Everlasting Word was of one Substance with His heavenly Father; Nestorius denied that He was born of a human Mother. There were, he taught (as had, in effect, Theodore of Mopsuestia before him), two distinct Persons in Christ, the Person of the Man Jesus, and the Person of the Eternal Word of God. These two Persons were joined by a strict union, which was only *moral* in its character, that is to say, by a perfect agreement of the wills, affections and operations of the two natures—so that the Divinity dwelt in the Humanity of Christ as in a Temple. There was, however, no

The Nestorian heresy.

substantial union between the two natures of Christ. From this it necessarily followed that there was not One Lord Jesus Christ, but two Christs—one God and the other Man. Thus was Christ divided. Another conclusion was inevitable. The Blessed Virgin was not rightly called *Theotokos*, or God-bearing (Mother of God)—the appellation freely given her by great Doctors of the Church such as Athanasius, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzum, a title dear to the Christian people—but only *Christotokos*, or Christ-bearing (Mother of Christ) and even *Anthropotokos*, or man-bearing (Mother of a Man). At first, Nestorius did not venture to teach his profane novelty from his patriarchal Chair. In the early days of his Episcopate he contented himself with insinuating it by means of his disciples. Soon, however, he grew more bold, and from the pulpit of the great Cathedral, which had listened to the pure doctrine and sublime eloquence of Gregory of Nazianzum and John Chrysostom, Nestorius did not fear to say:

> "I am asked if it be lawful to give to Mary the Virgin the title of *Theotokos*, or if it be right to term her simply *Anthropotokos*. Can it be that God has a Mother? . . . No, the creature has given birth not to the Creator, but to a Man, who was instrument of the Divinity. The Holy Spirit, by His operation from which was born the Son of Mary, merely prepared for God the Word a temple in the Virgin's womb."

We read that immediately these words fell from the lips of their Patriarch the whole congregation emitted cries of horror and fled from the church. The heresy, though, by striking at the Unity of the Person of Christ, it is destructive of the dogmatic basis of the Faith, was very subtle, and possibly might not have evoked such widespread and fierce indignation amongst the Faithful had it not openly struck at our Lady's honour and dignity. There was no longer room for subtlety. Stripped of all verbiage, it had been proclaimed by the Patriarch of Constantinople that Mary was not in truth the Mother of God. An issue had been suddenly raised such as all could comprehend. It was felt by Bishops, priests, and people that the very foundations of their religion, as they had received it from their fathers, had been assailed by the Bishop of that which had already become, after Rome, the most important See in Christendom.

Indignation of Catholics.

Throughout the Christian world there was the greatest agitation. Bishop after Bishop wrote to Nestorius to protest, but in vain. The heretic, now supported by all the influence and power of the Emperor Theodosius, was spreading his false doctrine far and wide by every means at his disposal. He had, however, failed to reckon aright with three great factors with which he had to deal—the authority of the Roman Pontiff, the loyalty of the Catholic

Imperial support given to Nestorius.

Episcopate, and the devotion of the Catholic people to the Holy Mother of God. St. Celestine I. sat on the Chair of Peter, and the great Cyril was the successor of Athanasius as Patriarch of Alexandria.

The Pope summons the Council of Ephesus.

The Pope summoned a Council to meet at Ephesus to deal with the teaching of Nestorius, and appointed St. Cyril as his Legate. More than two hundred Bishops assembled at Ephesus. Amongst them was Nestorius, surrounded by a bodyguard of soldiers which he had demanded of the Emperor. Three times summoned, the heretic refused to leave his lodgings, so the Council was compelled to proceed in his absence.

In the Council of Ephesus three stages may be distinguished; in the first the writings of Nestorius were read and set in contrast with the teaching of the Fathers, in the second we find the great discourse of St. Cyril, and in the last the sentence of the Pope promulgated by his Legate and proclaimed by the Bishops in definitive sentence and decree.

Before the Council St. Cyril had written to monks in Egypt:

> "I do not know how to express my astonishment when I see Christians hesitating to give the Holy Virgin the title of Mother of God. Since our Lord Jesus Christ is God, how can the Virgin, who gave Him birth, not be the Mother of God? The Apostles have taught us this truth, even though the word *Theotokos* be not found in their writings. The Holy Fathers never hesitated to use the term. . . .

> You may perhaps ask me: 'Was, then, the Holy Virgin Mother of the Divinity?' We know that the Eternal Word existed before Mary, and that from all Eternity He abides in the Bosom of His Father. But in the Incarnation there is a Mystery, which we can in some measure compare to that of human generation. All men who have ever been born are made up of soul and body. Our mothers gave us the corporal substance into which God has infused a soul. This fact does not hinder us from saying that they gave birth to a *man*. . . . The union of soul and body makes up the one person who is called *the man*, therefore she who gives birth to a man is truly his mother. After the same manner that the soul is united so strictly to the body—so indissolubly that one cannot separate them in the human person without destroying the man—in the Incarnation the Word was united to Human Nature to be born in the one and Indivisible Person of Jesus Christ our Lord and God."[1]

St. Cyril and Nestorius.

In the Council there was unanimity. It was an easy task to establish the true doctrine in condemnation of the Nestorian novelty. The writings of the Fathers were clear and categoric. There could be no doubt as to the Tradition that had been received from the Apostles.

It was then that Cyril delivered his great "Encomium on the Mother of God."

> "Hail, O Holy Mystical Trinity, who has called us all together to this church of Mary, Mother of God.

---

[1] *Epist.*, P.G., Tom. LXXVII., Cols. 1-40, *passim*.

"Hail Mary, of all things in the world most precious.

"Hail Mary, Mother of God. It is thanks to thee that the Shepherds chanted with the Angels, 'Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will.'

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is thanks to thee that the Wise Men brought their Gifts, guided by the Star.

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is thanks to thee that the Glorious College of the Apostles was chosen by the Saviour.

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is thanks to thee that the Baptist leaped in his Mother's womb, and that the torch was lowered before the Light that never can be extinguished.

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is through thee that the ineffable kindness of our God, of which the Apostle tells, has appeared amongst men.

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is from thee that has appeared the true Light, who says of Himself: 'I am the Light of the world.'

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is thou who didst give birth to the conqueror of death and hell.

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is thou who hast placed in this world its Creator and Redeemer, our Guide to the Kingdom of Heaven.

"Hail Mary, Mother of God, it is by thee that every faithful heart is saved.

"We salute thee, O treasure worthy of veneration, that belongest to all mankind. Crown of virginity! Sceptre of orthodoxy! Temple that can never be destroyed! Place of Him who is not held by place!

"We salute thee, Mary, Mother of God."[1]

---

[1] *Encomium ad Deip.*

The Pope had already examined the doctrine of Nestorius and condemned it in a local Council held in Rome. It only remained for Cyril to read the letter with which he had been furnished by the Vicar of Jesus Christ and to proceed with the formal deprivation and excommunication of the heretic.

The Doctrine of Nestorius condemned by the Pope in Rome and anew at Ephesus through St. Cyril.

> "Nestorius, having refused to obey our citation or to receive the Bishops whom we sent to him, we have been obliged to enter upon the examination of his impieties. He has been proved by his letters, his writings, his discourses, to have taught doctrines which are scandalous and heretical. Constrained by the Sacred Canons, and by the Letter of our Holy Father Celestine, Bishop of Rome, we have been compelled, shedding tears of sorrow, to pronounce against him this judgment: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ, whom he has blasphemed, has ordered, by His Council, that he be deprived of all ecclesiastical dignities, and be cut off from the Communion of the Church.'"

Thus was the true Faith vindicated together with the surpassing dignity of the Mother of God. The Council finally gave the solemn warning:

> "Should any man not acknowledge that Mary is Mother of God, let him know that he is cut off from the Divinity."

Closing of the Council.

As they left the Church, at the conclusion of the Council, the Bishops were met with acclamations and shouts of joy. They were conducted back to their lodgings escorted by guards of honour bearing lighted torches; men kissed the hem of their garments, the town was illuminated and late into the night rang with the glad shouts of the grateful people, "We hail thee, O Mother of God."

Joy of the people.

I have dwelt at some length on this episode, and with the connection of Mary with the city of Ephesus in Ionia—now little more than a memory—because it seems to me to be significant of so much that is not only past, but still lives. The conflict between Paganism and Christianity is not a dead issue. The opposite ideals still appeal to men as in the days when our Lady looked upon the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians, in its wanton splendour. The Council of Ephesus reminds us that the victory of Christianity must ever be identified with the glory of Mary Most Holy, the Blessed Mother of our God. In her divine Motherhood is to be found not only the sole security for the purity and integrity of the Faith but also the one hope for fallen men. It still remains true that there is no other Name whereby we can be saved but the Name of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. Were Mary not the Mother of God, her Son would be, as all other men, powerless to save either Himself or others. His power to help us in our needs is derived from this, that He is both the Son of God and the Son of Man—the Son of Mary ever-Virgin.

CHAPTER XIX

IMAGES OF MARY

O Flower of flowers, our Lady of the May !
  Not only for ourselves we plead, God's Flower !
Look on thy blinded children, who will stray,
  Lost in this pleasant land, thy chosen Dower !

  Send us a perfect spring ;
  Let faith arise and sing,
And England from her long, cold winter wake,
  Mother of Mercy ! Turn upon her need
  Thine eyes of mercy : be their spring indeed ;
So shall thine Angels make
  A starrier music, then our hearts can say,
  " O Flower of flowers, our Lady of the May !"

LIONEL JOHNSON.

Our Lady's images in East and West.

IN every part of the Catholic world it has seemed good to Almighty God to shower graces in profuse abundance upon His servants seeking His Mother's intercession before her holy images. In the East these representations or images are uniformly of a flat surface and are called " eikons " ; in the West they take the form either of pictures or statues. An image before which extraordinary graces have been frequently and notoriously obtained receives the appellation of "miraculous," and sometimes has been crowned by ecclesiastical authority. In the terrible iconoclastic persecution, martyrs shed their blood with joy in defence of the veneration of sacred images—a veneration which, it ought not to be necessary to observe, is only "relative"—that is, does not rest with the image, but passes on to the prototype whom the image recalls to the mind. For Catholics it is enough to know that veneration of images is approved by the Church. Any readers who are not Catholics should pause before they condemn this devotion, when they remember not merely its universality and antiquity, but also the manifest and undeniable fact that it has received the seal of Heaven's approval. How otherwise explain the wonderful miracles of bodily healing, the even more wonderful miracles of spiritual conversion, that have, in countless numbers, been worked in connection with the veneration of an image of the Mother of God? Of such wonderful conversions, I propose to recall one from remote ages—in many of its particulars it will, I think, be found to be full of interest.

St. Mary of Egypt.

Through the whole course of its history Alexandria has always been a shameless city, where vice knows not how to blush, but walks abroad naked and unabashed. It is so at the present day; it was so under the sway of Cleopatra; it was so in the fourth century after Christ. Notwithstanding the glory of its Theological Schools and notwithstanding the fact that the great mass of its inhabitants were Christian and Catholic in faith, to a vast extent pagan vices were uncontrolled. So terrible indeed was the corruption within the city that the Holy Spirit of God had met it by means of turning the thoughts of men to repudiation of an evil world on a scale and after a fashion unexampled before or since. Not merely individuals, but literally a multitude of Christians, received an inspiration to fly from the evil that was around them, that they might do penance in the encircling desert. The waste places of the Egyptian Thebaid, the solitudes of Arabia, of Palestine and Syria became the home of solitaries, who led lives of unparalleled austerity and practised Christian virtue in an heroic degree—many of them to be renowned in all ages for their sanctity—so that the prophecy was fulfilled and "the desert flowered like the lily"[1] in their lives. Amongst these saints of the wilderness, together with Paul, Antony, Hilarion, Pachomius and many another, the Church venerates one who is known simply as St. Mary of Egypt.

It was at this period, when extremes of good and evil stood in such vivid and extraordinary contrast, that a poor child became notorious in the streets of Alexandria. She was of Christian upbringing and had received at her baptism a great gift—the holy name of Mary. At the age of twelve she had abandoned her home, and for seventeen years lived the saddest life that a woman can live—using the charms that God had bestowed upon her, not to help men to that which is pure and lovely and of good report, but to seduce them to evil. But God had not abandoned His daughter. One day she found herself at the harbour of the town, when she noticed a troop of pilgrims embarking on a ship that was sailing for Palestine. They were bound for Jerusalem, whither they were going to celebrate the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Moved, as she afterwards admitted, merely by a spirit of curiosity and levity, Mary joined the pilgrims, in whose company she set sail and afterwards proceeded to the Holy City. On the Feast Day she endeavoured, together with the rest, to enter the church, where the Holy Cross was at the moment being solemnly venerated. But, as St. Sophronius, Patriarch of Jerusalem, has recorded:

---

[1] Isaias xxxv. 1.

> "An invisible force prevented her from entering the church. Standing in a corner of the porch, she was overwhelmed with intense sorrow at the remembrance of her sins—which caused her to weep much, to sigh and strike her breast. Then raising her eyes, she saw above her an Image of the Holy Mother of God and, looking at it with great earnestness, this was her prayer: 'O Lady and Virgin, who didst give birth to God according to the flesh, I know that it is not becoming or fit that I who am

> so loathsome should venerate thine Image, or gaze on it with these eyes of mine so foully polluted, since thou art known as the Virgin and chaste one, who hast preserved both body and soul immaculate. It is but just that I, a wanton, should be spurned and rejected by thy most pure cleanliness and chastity. Yet, since, as I have heard, this God—whose worthy Mother thou art—became Man, that He might call sinners to penance—do thou help me, who am alone and helpless. Receive my confession and permit me to enter the church, that I be not debarred from the sight of that most precious Wood whereto was nailed God made Man, whom thou a Virgin didst thyself conceive and bring forth—who gave His own Blood for my redemption. Command, O Lady, for me, too, all-unworthy, for the sake of devotion to the divine Cross, that the door be opened; and—taking thee all-worthy of trust for surety—I promise most faithfully to Christ thy Son that never henceforth will I defile my flesh with impurity; but immediately after I shall have seen, O holy Virgin, the Cross of thy Son, I will renounce the world and its deeds, and all the things that are in it, and will fare forth whithersoever thou, as my surety, shalt lead me.' "

Her biographer continues to make the Saint speak in her own person:

> "With these words, and taking some heart, kindling with the warmth of faith, and trusting in the bowels of pity of the Mother of God, I moved from the spot, where I had stood praying, and rejoined those who were entering the church. And now there was no one any longer to keep me back,

> nor to hinder my approach to the entrance doors, and so I found myself within the holy of holies and was permitted to adore the mystery of the life-giving wood of the Cross. . . . Then having cast myself down on the ground before it, I went out. Hastening to her who had become bail for me, I came to the place where the deed of suretyship had been drawn up, and kneeling before the face of the Holy Mother of God, I prayed to her in these words: 'Thou hast, indeed, O most gracious Lady, ever shown forth thy merciful goodness. Thou didst not reject an unworthy supplication. I have seen the Glory, which as sinners it is just that we should not see, the Glory of Almighty God who through thee accepts sinners' repentance. What more can I, a sinful wretch, bring to mind or tell forth? Now it is time for me to fulfil what I promised, in full reliance on thy love. Now, whither it pleases thee, direct me. Be thou to me a guide of salvation, and mistress of truth, going before me in the way that leads to penance.' Thus speaking, I heard the voice of one calling from afar: 'If thou wilt cross the Jordan, thou shalt find good repose.' I, then, on hearing this voice, and believing that it came for me, called out with tears, and looking at the Image of God's Mother, cried aloud: 'O Lady, Lady, Queen of the whole world, by whom salvation came to mankind, do not thou abandon me.' And thus saying I went forth from the porch of the church, and walked on with haste."

On reading this narrative of St. Sophronius, we shall perhaps, some of us, be reminded of the days when we used to read the speeches which Thucydides puts so freely into the mouth of his heroes. But just as there is no doubt that the speeches invented by Thucydides are really historical, though they were composed by the historian, since they represent the substance of what was really said at the time, and were placed in *oratio recta* only for the sake of dramatic effectiveness—so the history of Sophronius represents the essential fact—that Mary of Egypt believed herself unable to enter the church, that in her anguish of heart she looked at the picture of the gentle Mother whose name she bore, that she prayed to that Mother, promising her that, if only she might be allowed to go in and venerate, with the rest of the worshippers, the Wood of the Holy Cross, she would change her life, give up sin and do penance as God might direct her—and that her prayer was heard. The story goes on to tell us, that having confessed her sins and received the Holy Eucharist, Mary believed herself called by God to cross the Jordan, and bury herself in the desert. In the desert she was to pass forty-seven years of heroic penance. During the last thirty of these years her soul was in peace, but for the first seventeen (to atone, it would seem, for her seventeen years of sin and scandal in Alexandria) she was grievously tormented and tempted by Satan. St. Sophronius makes her say with regard to these temptations:

> " Weeping and striking my breast, I would recall myself to the memory of the pact of suretyship that I had made when going forth into this solitude. And again I would go in thought before the Image of the Mother of God, who had received me to her trust, and implore her to chase from me those thoughts that were affecting my most miserable soul. Then as I wept overmuch in my sorrow, and beat my breast with courage, I was wont to see a light all around, and shining about me. . . . When then some evil thought arose in my mind, I would prostrate myself on the ground, which I bathed with my tears, trusting that she who had become my surety, was really present at my side. . . . For I did not rise from the earth until that most sweet sentiment illumined me, as was usual, and chased away the thoughts that troubled me. Thus always did I raise the eyes of my soul unceasingly to her who was my surety, beseeching her to succour me in this solitude and penance. Hence I had her for my helper and coadjutor who gave birth to the Author of Chastity, and so during the course of seventeen years did I fight against many dangers till this day. From that time the Mother of God has stood by me as my help, directing me in all and through all things."[1]

The story goes on to relate that the holy penitent was visited in the desert by St. Zosimus, who brought her Holy Communion. Her penance accomplished in the desert, she died, and is said to have been buried under extraordinary circumstances. It is thought that her death took place on Good Friday in the year 431—the year when the title of *Theotokos* was authoritatively declared by the Church to be due to the great Mother of God.

---

[1] *Vita S. Mariæ Ægyptiacæ*, Cap. XV. *seq.* This Life was cited as the work of St. Sophronius at the Second Council of Nicæa (Act 4), and by St. John Damascene (Oratio III., *De Imaginibus*).

Images of our Lady in the British Isles.

Before the Reformation all over the British Isles pilgrimages were made with great devotion to Images of the Mother of God, famous throughout the length and breadth of the land—and far beyond its borders—for their glory and magnificence. Foreign travellers, like Erasmus, have left on record glowing accounts of the riches of English shrines of our Lady, and of the devotion of the English people to the Most Holy Virgin. Indeed England was known throughout Christendom as the Dowry of Mary, in consequence of the love of her people for their heavenly Queen. It is indeed sad to recall the names of our Lady of Glastonbury, of our Lady of Walsingham, of our Lady of Barking, of our Lady of Graces near the Tower, of our Lady of Willesden and our Lady of the Pue, of our Lady of Lincoln, of our Lady of the Crypt at Canterbury, of our Lady of Chatham and our Lady of Gillingham, of our Lady of Ipswich and our Lady of Stoke, of our Lady of Windsor and our Lady of Eton, of our Lady of Ludlow, of our Lady of Warwick, of our Lady of Coventry and our Lady of Depedale, of our Lady of the Black Friars at Cambridge, of our Lady of Binsey and our Lady of Oxford, where St. Edmund of Canterbury chose the Immaculate Virgin for his spouse, placing his ring upon the finger of her Image, of our Lady of Doncaster and our Lady of Beverley, of our Lady of Penrice, of our Lady of Worcester, of our Lady of Tewkesbury and our Lady of Evesham, where the Holy Mother of God in the seventh century of our era deigned to appear to Egin the Bishop and to Eoves the swineherd.

All these Images and many another were venerated far and wide, each of them was a centre of grace, benediction, pride and joy for the town which possessed them and the surrounding countryside—all were dearly loved by the people, and all were sacrilegiously destroyed by the hypocritical servants of the King who coveted their riches; some of them—amongst others the Holy Image of our Lady of Walsingham—were publicly burned. Who can recall without loathing the thought of the Eighth Henry, in the rapacity of his declining years, robbing our Lady of Walsingham of the rich necklace with which, in his days of youth and goodness, he had gifted the Mother of God, when making a pilgrimage of thankfulness with Katharine his wife after the birth of their first child ? Who can read without a shudder of the blasphemy of Latimer, Bishop of Worcester—Bishop by the influence of Anne Boleyn and his patron Thomas Cromwell—writing that he "trusted" that the Image so long the glory of his cathedral church should be consigned to the flames, for "she herself, with her old sister of Walsingham, her young sister of Ipswich, with their two sisters of Doncaster and Penrice, would make a jolly muster in Smithfield"? What Catholic can fail to be made the prouder of his Faith as he calls to mind Blessed John Forrest, the Franciscan, once Confessor to Queen Katharine, dying so bravely, hanging over a slow fire beneath his feet, because he would not deny the authority of the Vicar of Christ and acknowledge the King's supremacy; but what Catholic can fail to have his heart torn within him as he remembers that the fire which helped to send the Martyr to his Lord was fed by a holy Image much venerated in Wales called Darvell Gatheren, brought to London expressly for the purpose?[1]

---

[1] Foxe tells us with glee how the following verses, composed by a retainer of Cromwell called Gray, were set up on the gallows from which the Blessed John Forrest was suspended over the fire :

"David Darvell Gatheren, as saith the Welchmen.
  Brought outlaws out of Hell.
Now is he come with spear and shield, in harness to burn in
    Smithfield,
  For in Wales he may not dwell.
And Forrest the friar, that obstinate liar,
  That willingly shall be dead,
In his contumacy the Gospel did deny
  And the King to be supreme Head."

"To write scurrilous ballads to be sung in alehouses was a means of Reformation much in favour in those days," com-

The excuse for this horrible wickedness was that Images were abused—the charge made already by Mohammedans, by the obscene and savage Eastern Iconoclasts and by Wicliffites in England. Of this calumnious assertion—the excuse for that covetousness which is the root of all evil—there never has been adduced one tittle of evidence. The evidence on the contrary is overwhelming from the sermons and books of devotion of mediæval times which are still extant, that our fathers in the Faith were just as well aware of the true doctrine concerning holy Images, and no more likely to be led astray into idolatry, than are we, their Catholic children, to-day. The English Theologian Netter, writing against Wicliffe in defence of Christian Images, observed that for our doctrine in this matter we had the authority of the Church, and that the Apostle warns us not to be moved from that doctrine, though an angel from heaven should teach differently. But he somewhat grimly observes that in this case our faith is not tried by an angel who claims to come from heaven. On the one side are the Saints, on the other the Jews, the Mohammedans, the Iconoclasts and the fanatical anarchists known as Lollards.[1] Father Bridgett adds with reason :

---

ments Fr. Bridgett, "and greatly encouraged by Cromwell, who kept two or three poets for the purpose ; and Foxe, who censures the gaiety of Sir Thomas More, highly commends the wit of these gentlemen." (*Our Lady's Dowry*, p. 407.)

[1] Thomas Waldener's *Doctrinale Fidei*, Cap. CL.

> "This argument has lost nothing of its force since then. A Catholic has not to do violence to his own feelings in order to decide that in such a matter William of Wykeham and John Frober were more likely to be right than Hugh Latimer and Thomas Cranmer; Sir Thomas More than Thomas Cromwell; St. Francis of Sales, the author of *The Standard of the Cross*, than Bishop Jewel, the reputed author of *The Homily on the Peril of Idolatry*."[1]

Both Netter writing against Wicliffe and Blessed Thomas More writing against the sixteenth-century Reformer Tyndal appealed, on behalf of the veneration of holy Images, to the confirmation given by miracles, an argument which I have already urged upon my readers. Netter urges that, if Wicliffe, like Mohammed, despised miracles, it was because he was unable to work them, and quotes St. Augustine, who declares that when God sent His Apostles He confirmed their teaching by miracles, thus by divine testimony to save the world from endless and interminable disputations. Blessed Thomas More had called upon the Reformers to show miracles in defence of their innovations. To this Tyndal did not dare to reply by denying the reality of the miracles to which Catholics then, as now, appealed, but conveniently ascribed them to the devil. "Your doctrine is but the opinion of faithless people, to confirm which the devil hath wrought much subtilty." Sir Thomas answered thus:

---

[1] *Our Lady's Dowry*, p. 273

> "God ceaseth no year to work miracles in the Catholic Church, many and wonderful, both for His holy men, quick and dead, and for the doctrine that these heretics impugn, as Images, Relics and Pilgrimages, and the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, and these so many and in so many places that the heretics themselves cannot deny it; but are shamefully driven to say, like the Jews, that it is the devil that doeth them."[1]

Of the holy Images once honoured in the churches of Britain, only two remain. An Image of our Lady long venerated at Buckfast in Devon has been recently discovered, and, after restoration, been placed once more over her altar in the Abbey Church. Our Lady of Buckfast has come back to her ancient abode. A well-known statue of the Blessed Virgin for many centuries venerated in Aberdeen was saved when all else was destroyed by the wickedness of John Knox and his followers, and has found a home in the parish church of Finisterre in Brussels, where it is known as Notre Dame du Bon Succès. None other escaped the fury of the spoiler.[2] But our fathers' faith is still our heritage and once again we are free to venerate our Lady and her holy Images as in the days of old.

In Poland and Italy pictures are to be found rather than statues; elsewhere in the West statues are more common than pictures. In our English churches at the present day generally we find statues of our Lady, and often pictures—ordinarily copies of well-known miraculous pictures from Italy—such as our Lady of the Way, our Lady of Good Counsel, our Lady of Pompeii, or our Lady of Perpetual Succour. These holy Pictures, besides recalling the Mother of God to our minds and making prayer easier, of themselves impress upon our minds the deep mysteries of our Religion. For example, let us take the picture known as that of our Lady of Perpetual Succour. This sacred Picture, originally venerated in the East, was brought to Rome in the thirteenth century, where it was much honoured, and chosen by God to be the means of many and wonderful graces. In the troubles of the French occupation of the Eternal City at the end of the eighteenth century, the church in which it lived was destroyed by the revolutionary troops. Brought to the memory of the Roman people, under very remarkable circumstances, it was placed, by order of Pius IX., in the church of St. Alphonsus—a new edifice built on the site of its old home. From that moment God has worked innumerable miracles on behalf of those who have prayed before this picture—not only before the original in Rome, but also before the facsimiles of

---

[1] *Our Lady's Dowry*, p. 302.

[2] I speak of Images in churches. Several remain elsewhere—for example, the Image of our Lady in the Stonebow, Lincoln.

Pictures and Statues of our Lady.

Our Lady of Perpetual Succour.

the picture now to be found in every part of the world. If we ask ourselves why this devotion has been so favoured, perhaps we shall find the answer in the picture itself. In the East it is known as our Lady of the Sorrowful Vision. The Blessed Virgin, as usual, holds her Divine Child in her arms, but two angels, whom we see from the Greek letters to represent Michael and Gabriel, are showing Him the instruments of His Passion, whilst He is turning sadly aside and clinging to His Mother's hand. One shoe half-released from His foot reminds us that He is our Redeemer.[1] Thus as we gaze upon the Holy Picture we are reminded of the sublime, fundamental truth of Christianity. That Child is Divine—the Lord our God—otherwise He would not yet know the terrible future that lay open before His gaze. That Child is Human—Mary's Son—otherwise He would not fear. We see the Mystery hidden through the long ages, revealed at length in the fulness of time, God made of a Woman, God manifest in the Flesh. We see and we believe. Moreover the dear Lady, who thus shares, from the beginning, the Passion of her Son, is *our* Lady also, our Lady of Perpetual Succour. As the Lord Christ allowed Himself to be comforted by His Angels in the Garden of the Agony, so surely did He allow His Mother too to comfort Him in the days of His Weakness. As she comforted Him, so, if we will but let her, will she comfort us also—she who is our Heavenly Mother, affording us her succour and protection in all our needs.

---

[1] *Cf.* Ruth.

The loving Virgin who was the surety of Mary of Egypt in the desert, and is ever the support of all who trust her, will be with us her children even to the end.

CHAPTER XX

DEVELOPMENT OF DEVOTION TO MARY

"*Tunc præcepit, et dixit mihi Creator omnium: et qui creavit me, requievit in Tabernaculo meo, et dixit mihi: In Iacob inhabita, et in Israel hereditare, et in electis meis mitte radices . . . Et radicavi in populo honorificato.*"—ECCLUS. xxiv. 11-16.

ST. PAUL writing to Timothy compares the Christian Revelation to a deposit. "O Timothy, keep that which has been committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelty of words."[1] On this exhortation St. Vincent, monk of Lerins, commented thus in the fifth century:

St. Vincent of Lerins and Development of Doctrine.

> "Who at this day is *Timothy*, but either generally the Catholic Church, or especially the whole body of Prelates? . . . *Keep the Deposit.* What is the *deposit* committed to the trust of Timothy? It is that which has been entrusted to thee, not that which has been found out by thee; what thou hast received, not what thou hast thought out—a matter not of ingenuity, but of having been taught—not of private adoption, but of public tradition; something brought *to* thee, not

---

[1] Tim. vi. 20.

> brought out *by* thee, wherein thou must be not an author, but a keeper, not an originator, but a pursuer, not leading but following. 'Keep,' he says, 'the deposit'; preserve the Talent of the Catholic Faith inviolate and pure. Let that which has been entrusted to thee remain with thee, be delivered by thee. Thou hast received gold, give back gold—I will not that thou offer me one thing for another, and have the face to present me with lead instead of gold or to cheat me with brass. I want not the appearance of gold, but its reality."[1]

In these words we find expressed without compromise the fundamental principle of the inviolability and immutability of the Faith. That which the Apostles deposited with the Church, that which the Fathers have taught, Catholics will believe without change or variation until the end of time. There can be no surrender of the heritage that we have received from the past. The deposit which has been trusted to us must needs remain with us, if we ourselves are to remain Catholics, "inviolate and pure." There can be no surrender of any truth which we have received from God.

> "But," continues St. Vincent, "some one will perhaps say: 'Is there then no progress in religion in Christ's Church?' Surely there is; let us have progress, even the greatest. For who would be so envious of man, so hateful to God, as to seek to hinder it? But yet of such sort it should be, as to be in good truth a progress of the Faith, not a

---

[1] *Commonit.*, ii. 32.

> change thereof. It belongs to the nature of progress, that the particular thing itself should be amplified, but to the nature of change that something should be turned from one thing into another. Therefore, the understanding, the knowledge, the wisdom, ought to increase, and make much and vigorous progress, as well of every man in particular as of all in common, as well in the successive stages of a man's life, as in the various ages and times of the whole Church; but yet for all that, only in its own kind and nature, that is to say in the same doctrines, in the same sense, in the same judgment. Let the religion of our souls imitate the way of our bodies, which though, as years go by, they develop and unfold their proportions, yet remain the same that they were. There is a great difference between the flower of youth and the ripeness of old age, yet the selfsame men become old who once were young, so that although the state and condition of one and the selfsame man be altered, yet one and the selfsame nature, one and the selfsame person, still remain. Small are the limbs of infants, large are those of young men—yet they are the same. So many joints as young children have, so many have they when they are men; and if there are any parts that are put forth in course of more mature age, yet these were already planted after the manner of seed, so that nothing afterwards comes forth new in old men, which did not already lie hidden in them when they were still children."[1]

The Saint goes on to show how this analogy is applicable to the growth and progress to be found in the statement of the Faith.

---

[1] *Id.*

> "In like manner also it befits this doctrine of the Christian religion to follow these rules of progress . . . our fathers of old sowed in the Church's field the seeds of faith. . . . Whilst then there is some evolution in course of time from those first seminal beginnings, and the germs have been now fertilised and improved, yet nothing has been changed from its nature."[1]

Here we have clearly laid down another great principle, that of the Development of Christian Doctrine.

Progress does not involve change.

Progress and growth, whether in the natural or supernatural order, involve no essential change, for in the various stages of life there is always preservation of complete identity. Further, it is well known that the definition of doctrine has resulted in great measure from the gainsaying of heretics. At first, Christian truths were taught as propositions undeveloped in their implications—for example, "Christ is true God;" or again, "Christ is true Man." But when the revealed doctrine was insidiously assailed, it became necessary to draw it out in its various bearings and then to formulate it in clear-cut definition which would preclude the possibility of error. Such is the office of the Teaching Church. In this way it came to pass that the Arian, Apollonian, Nestorian, Eutychian and

The pressure of heresy.

---

[1] *Id.*

Monothelite heresies have been the occasion of furnishing us with those categorical and immutable affirmations of the Councils and the Creeds, which, immediately upon their promulgation, became for all the ages that were to follow the very touchstone of the Faith. No new doctrine was discovered, as heretics have idly dreamed, at Nicæa, Ephesus and Chalcedon, or in after years at Florence, Trent and the Vatican—it was the old doctrine handed down from the Apostles but stated in the face of error with scientific fulness and precision. Stone was carefully laid upon stone, each to rest immovable, until at last, standing foursquare against all winds and storms, arose the majestic Temple of Catholic Truth, as it is visible to all men to-day. This process of growth and building, under the watchful eye of the Church, receiving the seal of her sanction and approval, is what is meant in general by the Development of Christian Doctrine.

Nature of development of doctrine and devotion concerning our Lady.

Now, the interesting question arises. How far has there been such a process of development in connection with Catholic doctrine concerning the Mother of our Lord and with the devotion which is the outcome of that doctrine?

Cardinal Newman has written as follows:

> "I fully grant that *devotion* towards the Blessed Virgin has increased amongst Catholics with the progress of centuries: I do not allow that *doctrine*

> concerning her has undergone a growth, for I believe that it has been in substance one and the same from the beginning."[1]

In opposition to this deliberate expression of opinion by one whose right to speak with authority on the subject is indisputable, it has been asserted by opponents of Catholicism that our Lady's present place in Christendom can be traced to the Council of Ephesus as to its first beginnings.

This statement—so easy to make—is, on the very face of it, untrue, or at least a ridiculous exaggeration, inasmuch as it is out of harmony with known facts. The present position of the Blessed Virgin in Christendom depends in the main upon the primitive beliefs that she is the Mother of God, and that in the Redemption of mankind she co-operated with Christ, even as our first mother co-operated with Adam in our Fall. In the ultimate analysis all Catholic doctrine about our Lady—and consequent devotion—will be found to rest upon the foundation of these two truths.

Primitive beliefs about our Lady.

Few things are more remarkable than the unanimity and clearness of the teaching that has come down to us from sub-Apostolic times concerning the office of Mary as the second Eve.[2] This is categorical and admits of no development. Nor was there any hesitation at Ephesus concerning the

---

[1] *Answer to Dr. Pusey's Eirenicon*, p. 28.

[2] *Cf.* pp. 33-43.

Tradition with respect to the title of *Theotokos*. St. Cyril, preaching in a church dedicated to the Mother of God, found it easy to show that our Lady had been freely and generally called *Theotokos* by the Greek Fathers, whilst Nestorius, as we have seen, admitted without hesitation that in denying the lawfulness of that mighty word and of the truth which it enshrined, he was going counter to the teaching of all his predecessors. The thing was too clear to admit of prevarication. He was, admittedly, broaching a novelty, and was stigmatised by Catholics on this ground, if on no other, as "profane." The indignation of the Faithful against the heretic was due, I think, primarily to their traditional devotion to the Holy Mother of God, but it was also the result of their attachment to the Faith which had been handed down to them by their ancestors as a precious deposit received from the Apostles, to be guarded with fidelity and jealously "preserved inviolate and pure."

Images of our Lady in the Catacombs.

Again, long before the Council of Ephesus, representations of the Theotokos with her Child were placed over the altars of sacrifice in the Catacombs—a thing that would be impossible had she not already been held in the deepest veneration by the Faithful. Mgr. Barnes writes as follows:

> "The most important [of these frescoes] is to be found in the Catacomb of St. Priscilla and is of very

> early date. In the centre of the composition is a figure of the Good Shepherd, with a family group on the left. On the right is the Holy Virgin, seated and holding the Infant Jesus at her breast. Before her stands an upright figure who seems to represent a prophet [without doubt Isaias], and who is pointing to a star above her head. The style of the whole is classic in character, and the date can hardly be put later than the opening years of the second century."[1]

Professor Marucchi, the greatest authority on the subject, told a friend of mine that he was inclined to believe that this fresco dates even from the first century. Certainly it was placed in the lifetime of St. John over the altar-tomb where it still may be venerated.

In another painting, to be seen in the Catacomb of St. Domitilla, we find the Blessed Mother of God in the centre of the piece, veiled and seated upon a chair, with her Child upon her knees. The Wise Men (four in number) bring her their gifts on trays on either side. This is remarkable as representing in Rome the coming of the Gentiles to Jesus and Mary. In another similar scene a little later in date, which has survived in the Catacomb of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, the Wise Men are only two in number.

In the fourth century such pictures are already numerous. One in the Ostian cemetery over an altar-tomb is the prototype of all those pictures of our Lady which were common down to the Renaissance and still survive in the eikons of the East.[1]

---

[1] *The Early Church in the Light of the Monuments*, p. 176.

Still, it seems incredible that there should have not been in the very early ages some reserve in unfolding the doctrine concerning our Lady. We must always bear in mind that the place of the Blessed Virgin in Revelation is secondary, depending absolutely upon the Divine Personality of her Son.

Necessary reserve about our Lady in very early ages.

Until it was clearly understood and believed that Jesus of Nazareth was true God and true Man, the position of His Mother was not fully and finally set forth in public. So soon as there was no room for or ambiguity concerning the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was both the Son of Mary in time, and the co-equal Son of His Father from Eternity, the place of His Mother in the economy of Redemption was made clear in all its glory. But to teach a hostile world the truth concerning the Incarnation—that God had become Man and had been born of Mary the Virgin—was a gradual process—so difficult that it could only have been achieved successfully by means of extraordinary supernatural assistance from Heaven. The difficulty with regard to the Motherhood of Mary must have been especially acute.

Then as now, converts to Christianity from

---

[1] *Id.*, p. 177.

Judaism were required to learn a truth to which the prejudices of their Jewish upbringing were diametrically opposed—the truth that the Godhead of the Man Christ Jesus left intact and secure the great facts of the Unity and Spirituality of the Supreme Being, upon which all religion is based. Recognition of the place of the Mother of God would come later inevitably—for the moment it would, surely, have been unwise to lay emphasis upon such a title when it would easily have been confused with *Mother of the Divinity*. A secondary truth can only be profitably assimilated when the primary truth upon which it depends is already firmly and solidly established in the mind.

Difficulty with converts from Judaism.

With regard to converts from the Gentile world, there was another and a far more serious difficulty. That Gentile world was steeped in the grossest and foullest polytheism. Goddesses were worshipped alongside of gods. To speak much to those who came to Christianity from the paganism of Egypt and Syria of the veneration due to Mary might easily have recalled to their mind thoughts of Isis, Astarte, Astaraoth, and Cybele, thus associating the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God with the most odious, because the most lascivious, form of idolatry—a horror at all costs to be rendered impossible. One sees at once that a premature attempt to exhibit the sublime

And from the Pagan world.

dignity of our Lady might have led to her degradation in hearts not yet ripe for pure conceptions, and might even have vitiated Christianity at its source.

That this was not an empty danger is proved by the fact that, notwithstanding all the precautions that doubtless were taken to teach the Faith in its due proportions, an obscure sect sprang up in Scythia and Thrace, whence it was imported into Arabia—nearly a century, it may be noted, before the Council of Ephesus — which actually did treat the Blessed Virgin as a goddess. The ignorant votaries of this strange perversion of religion went so far as to offer sacrifice, by the hands of women, to our Lady, offering her little cakes (*κολλυρίδια*). Hence their name of Collyridians. Our knowledge of these fanatics is derived from St. Epiphanius, who writes as follows:

The Collyridians.

> "Mary is not a goddess. Nor had she her body from Heaven, but was born as others from human parents, though, like Isaac, she was given according to promise by a special dispensation of Providence. But let no one offer sacrifice to her name, or he will ruin his own soul. Let no one be found, on the other hand, who should, as though drunk with wine, insult the holy Virgin [by denying her perpetual virginity, as the Helvidian heretics were then insulting her]. God forbid! Virgin she was both before and after she gave birth to the Saviour."[1]

---

[1] *Hær.*, lxxviii. 23, 24.

The heresy of these Collyridians is of but trifling importance in the history of the Church. It never affected more than a handful of people, and soon completely disappeared and was forgotten, though a similar error attracted the attention of St. John Damascene. Still, the fact that it existed, on however limited a scale and for however short a space of time, suffices to enforce an important lesson. If the most dangerous misconceptions are to be avoided, truths must be taught in their due order and proportion. It is fatal to attempt to raise the walls of any building before the foundations have been laid securely.

The Council of Ephesus promoted devotion to our Lady already existing in the Church.

It therefore seems to be certain that the Council of Ephesus, though far indeed from originating devotion to our Lady, did give a great *impetus* to that which was already dear to Christendom. The foundations had now been laid securely. No one who had been taught the truths of Christianity, as laid down by the great Councils, could regard the Blessed Virgin as apart from her Son. It had been taught at Nicæa that the Incarnate Word was in His Divine Nature Consubstantial with the Father; it was now taught at Ephesus that the Eternal Son had been born in Human Nature of a human Mother. No confusion as to the source of Mary's dignity was henceforward possible. The title given by the Ancient Fathers to the Mother of their Lord was solemnly confirmed. She was *Theotokos*—the Mother of God. It followed that all the honour that was hers was her due not as sovereign but as subject, not as the source but as the channel, not as the Creator but as the creature who had been drawn into ineffable nearness to her Maker. There could no longer be any danger of scandalising the neophytes, or of giving colour to disastrous misrepresentations, or of provoking the calumnies of the worshippers of the gods and goddesses of mythology. Any reason for reserve forthwith ceased to exist. The sacred names of Jesus and Mary were joined in the hearts and on the lips of all Christian men. Jesus was God. Mary was His Mother.

Development of doctrine concerning our Lord's Humanity.

Subsequently to Ephesus there was a development of doctrine concerning our Lord. Twenty years after the close of the Council of Ephesus it was taught at Chalcedon—against the Monophysites who maintained that the Human Nature in Christ was swallowed up in the Divine as a drop of water in a cup of wine—that the two Natures remain distinct in the One Lord Jesus Christ. Christ our Lord is truly Man. He possesses a Human Nature which He assumed of Mary His Mother, perfect in all that belongs properly to human nature as such: "He is like us in all things, sin only excepted." From this it follows (as was afterwards defined against the

Monothelites) that our Lord possesses two Wills—a Human Will belonging to His Human Nature as well as His Divine Will as God. The doctrine of the two Wills in Christ is a development from the doctrine of the two Natures. Similarly, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is the development or unfolding of the doctrine that Mary is the Second Eve, in which it lay hidden as a germ; just as the doctrine of Original Sin is itself a development that may be deduced from the doctrine laid down by St. Paul that our Lord is the Second Adam, the Redeemer of all men.

But little development of doctrine concerning our Lady.

Apart from the explicit affirmation of the Immaculate Conception and (in the East) of Mary's actual sinlessness — never doubted in the West — I can find surprisingly little evidence of development of *doctrine* concerning our Lady. With whateve element of caution that may have been necessary here and there, the Catholic Doctrine concerning the Blessed Virgin and her exaltation as Mother of God, combined with her office as the Woman chosen to co-operate with the Saviour in the work of human reparation, was preached emphatically from the beginning in all parts of Christendom, both East and West. I have given in this book sufficient quotations from the early Fathers abundantly to establish the truth of this statement. I think, however, that the opinion as to the Blessed Virgin being the channel of all graces is a development of the patristic doctrines concerning the Motherhood of Mary—Mother of Christians as well as of Christ—and her position as the Second Eve in the economy of Redemption.

St. Ephrem and popular devotions to our Lady.

If from *doctrine* we turn to *devotion*, we are confronted with the difficulty that with the single exception of the writings of St. Ephrem, nothing has come down to us from the first five centuries which gives us any clue to the popular devotions of the Faithful. St. Ephrem was a zealous missionary preacher whose sermons and hymns brought him into direct touch with the feelings and religious habits of the people. It is very remarkable that St. Ephrem's writings disclose an enthusiastic devotion to our Lady, such as has been surpassed in no period of the Church's history. It may, perhaps, be hardly safe to draw wide conclusions from one example, but this at least may be affirmed with safety, that there is no record of the slightest protest against prayer and devotion to the Blessed Virgin, as practised amongst Catholics, however strongly expressed, until we come to the disastrous epoch of the Lutheran Reformation. Nor is there the slightest sign of such devotion being regarded anywhere as a novelty in the Church. In exuberance of picturesque language it would seem impossible to go beyond St. Ephrem.

In the West, no doubt, it has increased in warmth of expression; but, so far as *positive* evidence is available, we shall find that in essence it is everywhere the same in every age as far back as we can trace.

Devotion to the Martyrs.

It has been pointed out that during the times of the early persecutions we find more numerous references to the invocation of the Martyrs than to that of our Lady. But what conclusion is to be drawn from this fact? It is equally true to say that we find more numerous references in the writings of this period to the invocation of the Martyrs than to prayer to our Lord Himself. Is it, then, suggested that the early Christians held that the holy Martyrs were more to be honoured, were more powerful intercessors than the Blessed Virgin, or even than the One Mediator of Redemption, through whom alone the prayers of Martyrs, or of Mary, or of any other creature can avail us aught? To ask the question with regard to our Lord and Saviour is to expose its blasphemous character and therefore to answer it; whilst to show the mind of Antiquity with reference to the position of the Mother of God, in relation to the holy Martyrs, we may quote Basil of Seleucia, who evidently feels that he is expressing the sentiment of all:

> "What sufficiently worthy praises shall we bestow upon her whose merit is above all things of earth? . . . What shall we say of the Mother of

> God, who shone as much beyond all the Martyrs in splendour, as the sun outshines with its blaze the twinkling rays of the stars ?"[1]

External manifestation of devotion.

It would be a very serious mistake to estimate the relative importance of devotion by its external manifestations. A mother may lavish signs of affection on her child that would not be becoming were they offered to her husband. It by no means follows that her love for her child is deeper than her love for her husband. Love for husband and love for child belong to a different order of feeling; they are therefore suitably manifested in different fashions. So is it with regard to the devotion of Catholic Christians as manifested respectively to the Saints, to the Blessed Virgin and to our Divine Lord. It is by no means uncommon to find holy people speaking of some Saint, whom they have constituted their special Patron in Heaven, in such a manner that the unwary, who are strangers to the true inwardness of the Catholic religion, might, most unjustly, imagine that the Saint was the very centre of their devotion. To take two examples. In the fourth century St. Paulinus of Nola was extraordinarily devout to St. Felix; in the nineteenth century the Blessed Curé d'Ars to the Virgin-Martyr St. Philomena.

Special devotion to a Patron Saint.

---

[1] *Orat. in Deiparam.*

St. Paulinus, in a poem composed in honour of St. Felix, wrote thus:

> "Fifteen years have passed since I made my Vow and consecrated my soul to thee [that is, when he first entered the Church of St. Felix at Nola, and there witnessed the miracles worked through the Saint's intercession]. Business, obliging me to journey over land and sea, has kept me far from thy tomb. Thou knowest that I have always invoked thee in difficulties and dangers. Under thy guidance I have travelled over the seas (not without thee, for I have felt thy protection) and have triumphed over all danger in Jesus Christ our Lord. Always by land and sea I have owed my safety to thee."[1]

Again:

> "Who has taught me to despise all things, in order to give myself to Jesus Christ? Who but thou, Felix, my powerful protector? It is thou who hast broken the chains of my flesh."[2] Paulinus writes further that he owes to St. Felix everything in this present life and all his hopes for the next, and accounts himself as given by Christ Himself as a slave to the service of the Saint.[3]

Of the Curé d'Ars we read that he was wont continually to speak of St. Philomena and to ascribe all good things that came to him to her intercession. How unjust, how manifestly untrue, to imagine that St. Paulinus attached greater importance to the protection of St. Felix than to that of the Blessed Virgin, or that the Curé d'Ars trusted St. Philomena more than he trusted the Mother of God.

---

[1] *Carm. XIII., Nat.* ii. 6, 13, 14, p. 345 *seq.*

[2] *Nat.* xiii. 449, 450; xiii. 440-7.

[3] *Carm. XIII., Nat.* ii. 6, 13, 14, p. 345 *seq.*

Christians, men, women and children, who were in daily—in hourly—danger of being subjected to the most terrible torments for the Faith, of being cast into noisome prisons, of being slowly starved to death, of being broken upon the wheel, of being thrown before wild beasts to be their prey, of being cast into the hands of human enemies more ferocious than any beasts, most rightly encouraged themselves by the thought of the Martyrs who had already endured these torments, "of whom this world was not worthy," and sought their intercession that they too might receive the strength to endure. It is wanton to suggest from this fact that Christians in the early ages honoured the Martyrs more than they honoured the Blessed Mother, who stood, her soul transfixed, beneath the Cross during the Passion of her Son.

It is sad to know that the Protestant writers who insist that during the period of persecution greater devotion was manifested to the Martyrs than to the Blessed Virgin consider themselves to be forbidden by the principles of their religion to seek the intercession either of the Blessed Virgin or that of the Martyrs. If they will not pray to our Lady, one wishes that at least they would imitate the admitted example of the early Christians by praying to the

Holy Martyrs. If they would once begin to pray to the Martyrs, one is sure that they would soon go on to pray to the Martyrs' Queen, greatly to their souls' health and welfare.

Increase of devotion to the sacred Humanity of our Lord.

If *devotion* to the Blessed Virgin has increased amongst Catholics through the ages, so undeniably has devotion to the Sacred Humanity of her Divine Son. At the close of the patristic period of ecclesiastical history St. Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, who is called the last of the Fathers, and St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the first of the Schoolmen—both of them Doctors of the Church—spread far and wide by their writings and sermons an extraordinarily tender piety towards our Incarnate Lord and His sweet Mother. During the period of what are known as the Christological heresies, when the main preoccupation of the great Fathers of the Church was to secure belief in the Divinity of the Word made Flesh, His Blessed Mother was glorified especially as the Mother of God. By the time of St. Bernard the Catholic doctrine concerning our Lord's Divinity had been fixed without cavil or dispute in the consciousness of all Christendom. Henceforward the devotion of the Faithful to our Lord as Man was developed throughout the Western Church to an extent which might not have been expedient until strife had been hushed concerning His Godhead. The piety of the Faithful was deliberately directed towards the Man Christ Jesus, our Brother and our Friend. And as Christians dwelt more and more upon the thought of our Lord, not only as God, but also as Man, so more and more did they think of His Mother not only as His Mother, the Mother of God, but also as the Mother of His Brethren, as their Mother too, and as the chosen channel of grace. The Man Christ Jesus and His Mother Mary never were separated in the thoughts and affections of the Middle Ages. From the time of St. Bernard to our own we find constant development of popular devotion in the Catholic Church towards the adorable Humanity of our Blessed Lord, manifesting itself in special devotions to His Holy Name, to His Five Wounds, to His Precious Blood, to His Sacred Heart, and to the Blessed Sacrament exposed upon our Altars. Conjoined with this development we always meet with marked devotion to our Blessed Lady. It is impossible, without shameful violence, to separate those whom God has joined together, the Mother and her Son. There is an extraordinarily intimate connection, in particular, between devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, full of love for men, in the Divine Eucharist, and love of His Immaculate Mother. It would be difficult indeed to forget that to the co-operation of Mary we owe the adorable Humanity of our Lord and therefore His love for men in the Blessed Sacrament of our Altars. When we are most thankful to God, we realize most clearly that we owe all we have to Mary, the Holy Mother of our Lord.

But Protestantism came into the world and banished the Real Presence of Jesus Christ from its churches and prayer to Mary from its worship—with the result that Protestant worship is, for the most part, as cold and melancholy as are its empty churches.

The Law of growth.

Whatever, then, may be the *degree* of development, whether in Christian doctrine, which is always unchangeable in its substance, or in Christian worship, which admits of manifold variation—we find the law of growth, working according to the designs of God. Therefore, investigation as to the extent of development is an historical question of purely academic interest. We cannot, if we would, live now as though we were still in the fourth century, when Pope Damasus ruled the Church of God.[1] It is no more possible to revive the past than it is to re-live the days of our bodily infancy or youth. To attempt such a course would be to court spiritual disaster. In God's Providence we are living in the twentieth century under Pope Benedict, who holds the place and exercises the authority of all who have gone before him, seated on Peter's Chair. Our practical duty, as distinct from our theoretical investigations, is to remember the exhortation of St. Vincent of Lerins: "To increase and make much and strenuous progress, as well of every man in particular as of all men in common, as well in the successive stages of man's life as in the various ages and times of the whole Church."

---

[1] Ambrosiaster, commenting on the words of St. Paul: "Ecclesia Dei vivi, columna et firmamentum veritatis," observes, "Ecclesia cujus hodie Rector est Damasus." *Comment. in Epist.* i. *ad Tim.* iii. 14, 15.

The more we strive to increase and make progress in the knowledge and love of Mary in the successive stages of our own lives—the more earnestly we endeavour, so far as in us lies, to spread abroad that knowledge and that love far and wide around us, the more may we hope to be ourselves blessed by God, and to bring blessings untold to those whom we may encourage to trust God's Blessed Mother. Happy he in whose soul from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to ripe old age, has been developed and strengthened, each year that passes by, devotion to our Lady—for knowledge and love of Mary bring, as certainly as the dawn brings the fulness of the day, the knowledge and the love of God. Devotion to Mary as it develops within our hearts, and in the world around us, leads without fail to the rich development of that which is the one hope of our own poor hearts—the one hope of a sick and weary world—the supreme love of Jesus Christ our Lord, who is Blessed Mary's Son.

CHAPTER XXI

VISIONS AND MIRACLES OF MARY

"I have multiplied visions."—Hos. xii. 10.

Our Lady reigns with Christ in Heaven, but Catholics rejoice to know that throughout the long centuries which have elapsed since her glorious Assumption, she has, when God saw fit, deigned to visit and console her children upon the earth.

Necromancy.

Human beings, devoured by a fierce and insatiable curiosity with regard to the unseen world, and not content yet awhile to see as in a glass darkly, have too often attempted by dark and forbidden ways to pry into the invisible. From the earliest ages to the present day, attempts have been made by means of various kinds of necromancy to enter into relations with the disembodied souls of the departed. All such attempts are sternly forbidden in the Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament, and by the Church of God in every age of her history. Men and women who disregard this prohibition do so at their own peril and run the greatest dangers both for soul and body. The inevitableness of gross delusion, the risk of becoming the victims either of impostors or of evil spirits, consequent relaxation of the moral fibre, a strange weakening of the power of the will, not seldom deplorable lapses into sensuality, and, in the case of Catholics, the greatest of all evils, the loss of the Faith itself—such are amongst the woeful miseries which follow in this matter upon disregard of the warnings of the Church and defiance of her commands. Witchcraft and all superstitions are abhorrent to God. But, though the Divine Law strictly forbids Christians, whose vocation it is here below to walk not by sight but by faith, thus to attempt through sinful curiosity to raise before the time the veil that hangs between this world and the other, still it has pleased the Almighty Lord of both Heaven and earth, when He sees that it will benefit His people, to draw back the curtain for a few brief moments, with His own Hand, and on occasion to permit the spirits of the departed to visit their friends still detained upon the earth. Moreover, to certain chosen souls our Lord has deigned to grant, when the needs of His Church required it, visions of His Saints and of His Blessed Mother—sometimes (but very rarely) even of His own glorified Humanity. Such visions, when we are assured that they are real and divine, that is,

Apparitions of the Holy Souls.

And of our Lady and the Saints.

neither the result merely of our own disordered imagination, nor the work of the powers of evil, should be welcomed by men, as coming from God. With regard to such visions there is an attitude of credulity that is much to be deprecated, but I do not think that it is likely in the end to be so injurious to the soul as the opposite extreme of blank, persistent unbelief. St. Paul writes that he would not believe any other Gospel than that which he had received and preached, even though it were delivered to him by one who claimed to be an angel of Heaven, for should any spiritual visitant teach anything against the Faith that has once been delivered, we should know him to be an angel of darkness under the appearance of an angel of light.[1] Accordingly we are commanded to test the spirits whether they be of God[2]—under which command may, I think, be included apparitions from the other world. But how can we test them, if there be no spirits to test? Or, how can we be deceived by an evil angel appearing under the guise of a good angel, if neither evil nor good angels have ever visited mankind? It is obvious that to reject all such apparitions is not merely to smile at the solemn Theophanies of the Old Testament, but even to reduce the Annunciation of Gabriel to Mary to the unreality of a fairy tale. Such a shocking and blasphemous conclusion has been reached and even publicly avowed by highly placed Anglican clergymen, who still remain of good repute amongst their co-religionists. Catholics should be thankful to know that they are secured against the possibility of any such spiritual shipwreck, so long as they hold fast to the principles of their religion. If any Catholic were to maintain that no apparition of Angel or Saint had taken place since the times recorded in the New Testament—since, for example, our Lord sent His Angel to deliver Peter from prison—he would put himself hopelessly outside of the stream of Catholic tradition, as well as of Catholic thought and feeling; moreover, he would be heaping up unnecessary difficulties for himself, since once admit that apparitions from the unseen world have ceased to take place, and it becomes increasingly difficult to believe that they ever occurred, even though they be recorded in the Bible. On the other hand, once recognise that they may be granted at the present day, and every difficulty presented by the Bible narrative in this matter is reduced to a minimum. Catholics, therefore, are not commonly surprised when they hear of apparitions of the dead (whether of Saints from Heaven or of souls from Purgatory); rather the surprise well may be that such apparitions do not occur more frequently.

---

[1] Gal. i. 6, 8.

[2] 1 John iv. 1.

It is hardly necessary to observe that Catholics are warned to be most careful not to suffer themselves to be the victims of hallucination or fraud—a warning which is of far greater importance in the case of any vision (for example, of our Lord or the Blessed Virgin) which purports to be of public interest, and to convey a message to the world, than it can be when a friend appears, so to speak privately, from the other world to his friend, merely for his consolation or to ask prayers for the repose of his own soul.

Danger of hallucination.

Wherever there is question of any apparition that purports to bring a message from Heaven, the Church is accustomed to step in with her well-known caution, often imposing strict regulations of silence upon all concerned until the alleged events have been juridically and thoroughly investigated.

Caution of the Church with regard to visions.

The truth of every vision depends ultimately upon the strength of the evidence, by which it is proved to be real and to have come from God. Still, I think that a Catholic would be rash indeed were he (without the strongest reasons, could such be imagined to exist) to deny the reality of such visions, as those of our Lord to St. Juliana, and to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (which resulted in the institution of the Feasts of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart), or of the Blessed Virgin at Lourdes—since upon such visions as these (I think that there are but few) the Church would seem to have set definitely, and even authoritatively, the seal of her sanction and approval.

And miracles.

The principles that apply to visions hold also with respect to miracles. On the one hand much care should be exercised before we accept the miraculous character of any extraordinary event; on the other hand it may not be asserted by Catholics that miracles have altogether ceased in the Church from the days of the Apostles to our own, nor may it lawfully be denied that they will continue to the end. For those at least who believe in the Bible, the words of Cardinal Newman should settle the matter, so far as reasonableness is concerned. "Protestants assert that since miracles once occurred they are likely to have ceased; Catholics maintain that the fact that they took place once constitutes a presumption of their continuance." No doubt miracles were more numerous in the early centuries, in times when they were still necessary for the confirmation of the Faith, than has been the case in succeeding ages. Nevertheless, the evidence that they have taken place in every century and all over the world is overwhelming when it is examined dispassionately and apart from the prejudice which, on *a priori* grounds, denies the possibility of the miraculous, and consequently refuses to look seriously at the facts.

In this book I am concerned solely with visions and miracles of our Lady. The miracles worked by our Lady are innumerable. We have accounts of apparitions of our Lady recorded without interruption throughout the course of Christian history, and though they may be separated by long tracts of time, they singularly resemble one another in their external characteristics. All that I can do here is to narrate the leading facts concerning a few of these wondrous events, and leave them to speak for the rest. As I must make some choice, I will take three visions of our Lady, which are connected with the names of the great Gregories in the early centuries, and then will pass abruptly to the nineteenth century in France.

Five great Gregories.

Among the Fathers of the Church we find five famous Bishops bearing the name of Gregory, whom we venerate upon our altars. St. Gregory (born A.D. 200), known as the *Thaumaturgus* or Wonderworker, was Bishop of Neo-Cæsarea in the third century. St. Gregory of Nyssa (brother of the great St. Basil) and St. Gregory, Bishop of Nazianzum in Cappadocia, a Doctor of the Church, flourished in the fourth century, whilst the St. Gregory the Pope, called the Great, Doctor of the Church and Apostle of the English, was a contemporary of St. Gregory, Bishop of Tours. They all bear witness to the power and goodness of our Lady.

St. Gregory of Nyssa wrote the life of *St. Gregory*

Thaumaturgus. In the course of this Life we find the following history:

Vision of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus.

> "Gregory being thus constrained to bear the yoke of the episcopate, having gone through all the prescribed ceremonies, asked of him who had assigned to him the priesthood, a brief space of time for obtaining a more exact knowledge of the Mystery of the Faith. . . . Now, as he was one whole night long pondering on the truths of the Faith—for there were at that time, too, some who sought to adulterate the orthodox teaching, and often by their plausible arguments made the truth ambiguous even to the learned and the prudent—there appeared to him one in human shape, of aged mien and of sacred character, as was seen by the form and arrangement of his garb, showing marks of great virtue by the grace of his countenance and his whole bearing. Gregory, amazed at the vision, was about to rise from his bed, and to ask him who he was and wherefore he had come. But the other calmed the trouble of his mind, speaking with gentle voice and telling him that it was by divine command that he appeared—on account of the questions that were exercising him—for the revealing to him of the truth of the orthodox Faith. At these words, Gregory began to take courage and to regard him with mingled feelings of joy and awe. The latter then stretched forth his hand, and, with fingers extended, pointed out to Gregory what was appearing on the other side. Gregory, turning his eyes in the direction of the hand, beheld facing him another vision in woman's form more excellent than

> human. Struck again with awe, he let fall his gaze, lost in bewilderment at the apparition, and unable to bear the sight of the vision, for what was most astonishing in the vision was this—that, although it was deep night, a light shone forth upon him from those who appeared, as if some bright, blazing torch had been enkindled. Whilst, then, his eyes were unable to bear the apparition, he heard them conversing together on the subject of his doubts, and thereby learned not only a true knowledge of the Faith, but also heard their names, as they addressed each other by their respective titles. And thus he is said to have heard the person in woman's shape bid 'John the Evangelist' disclose to the young man the Mystery of Godliness, whilst he replied that he was ready to comply with the wish of 'the Mother of the Lord.' He then pronounced a formulary well-turned and complete. And so they vanished. This divine formula of Christian Doctrine Gregory at once committed to writing, and conformably to it afterwards preached in the Church. Moreover, he left the same divinely given teaching as a legacy to his successors. By it the people of that city have been instructed in the Mysteries of the Faith until the present day and have remained proof against all heretical pravity."[1]

The ecclesiastical historian Sozomen writes as follows:

> "At the time when the Arians, whose leader was Demophilus, had still possession of the Churches

---

[1] *De Vita S. Gregorii Thaumaturg.*, Migne, P.G., Tom. XLVI., p. 910.

Apparitions of our Lady at Constantinople during the Episcopate of St. Gregory of Nazianzum.

[at Constantinople], whilst *Gregory of Nazianzum* presided over those who acknowledged the Consubstantial Trinity. Now he was accustomed to hold the ecclesiastical services in a poor little house which had been formed into a house of prayer by men of the same Faith, both for himself and for those who worshipped with him. In course of time this church became renowned above the other churches of the capital, not only because of the beauty and size of its structure, but also on account of graces of evidently divine apparitions which were there granted to the Faithful. For a divine power which was there manifested, both in waking visions and dreams, came to the relief, over and over again, of many who were suffering from various diseases and accidents. It was believed that this was the Holy Virgin Mother of God. *For thus is she wont to appear*."[1]

Story of the prayer of St. Justina to our Lady.

St. Gregory Nazianzum in his own writings records no instance of any vision of our Lady, but in a sermon preached in this church of which we have just read, he told the story of Justina, the Virgin Martyr. Justina, when previously assailed by the sinful passion of a certain Cyprian, "supplicated Mary the Virgin to succour her, who was also a virgin, in her danger." Our Lady heard the prayer in a wonderful manner. Cyprian was converted to the Faith, and martyred on September 26 in the year 304, together with Justina. The Church honours these two holy martyrs together each year on the anniversary of their glorious martyrdom.[1]

---

[1] Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.*, L. VIII., c. 5.

We owe the following narrative to *St. Gregory of Tours :*

Miracle worked by our Lady on behalf of a Jewish boy.

> "I will not pass over what happened in the East for confirmation of the Catholic Faith. A certain Jewish glass-worker's child who was at school with Christian boys, one day, whilst at Mass in the Basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary, went, though himself a Jewish boy, with other children to receive the Glorious Body and Blood of the Lord. After having received the Holy Sacrament, he returned with gladness to his father's house. Full of joy he told what he had received. But the father, who hated Christ and His religion, said : 'Since forgetful of the religion of thy fathers, thou hast communicated with those children—to avenge the injury done to the Law of Moses—thy father though I be, I will kill thee without mercy.' Then, taking his child to the mouth of a burning furnace, he threw him in, and, laying on more wood that it might burn the more fiercely, he stood by. But that same Mercy, which bathed of old, with the cloud of dew, the Three Hebrew Children cast into the Chaldean furnace, failed not now. For it did not suffer him either, as he lay in the midst of the flames and heaps of live coals, to be in any way injured. Now, when the mother heard that the father had determined to

---

[1] *Orat.* XXIV. 11 ; *In Laud. S. Cypriani. Cf.* Lesson in the second Nocturn at Matins for September 26.

> burn their child to death, she ran to save him. But on seeing the fire blazing out from the yawning mouth of the furnace with overpowering flame, she cast to the ground the ornament from off her head, and dishevelling her hair with woeful laments, filled the whole neighbourhood with her cries. When then the Christians learned what had happened, they all ran up together to the iniquitous sight, and after extricating the burning embers from the mouth of the furnace, they found the little boy lying down as though on a bed of the softest feathers. On his being taken out, they were all in a marvel to find him unhurt, and the place was filled with their shouts, and in this way the whole people gave praise to the Lord. . . . Then they asked the little fellow what sort of a fireshade (*umbraculum*) he had in the flames, and he said: 'The Lady—sitting in the chair in that Basilica where I received Bread from the Table, who bears in her Bosom a little tiny Infant—she it was who covered me with her mantle, so that the fire might not devour me.' There is no doubt at all but that the Blessed Mary appeared to him. The child, then, having been instructed in the Catholic Faith, believed in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and being washed, together with his mother, in the saving waters, was born once more."[1]

Our last story from this period may be taken from the Dialogues of *St. Gregory the Great*.

> "Nor do I pass over in silence what the same servant of God, Probus, used to relate about his

---

[1] *Miraculorum*, Lib. I., cap. x.

sister, a little girl named Musa, how that one night the Holy Mother of God and ever-Virgin Mary appeared to her in a vision, and showed her some young girls of her own age in white garments. And as Musa was wishing to be with them, yet ventured not to join them, she was asked, through the voice of the Blessed Mary, whether she desired to be with them and to live in her service. And when the little girl said to our Lady, 'I do wish it,' she at once received a command from her, not any more to do anything frivolous and childish, and to abstain from giddiness and jokes; and was told for certain that she would enter into the Blessed Virgin's service, to be of the number of virgins she had seen, on the thirteenth day. After this vision the girl Musa became changed in her whole conduct, and put away from her all childish levity by great efforts of gravity. Now when her parents, marvelling at the change, questioned her on the matter, she told them that which the Mother of God had enjoined upon her, and the day she was to go to her service. Then after the twenty-fifth day she was taken ill with fever. And on the thirteenth day, when the hour of her departure drew nigh, she beheld the same Blessed Mother of God, with the young girls whom she had seen in the vision, come towards her. On our Lady now calling her, she began to answer, and with her eyes modestly cast down and a very gentle voice, to cry: 'Behold, O Lady, I come. Now, O Lady, I come.' And with these words, she gave up the ghost, and her soul went forth from her virgin body to dwell with the holy virgins in heaven."[1]

Vision of our Lady to a little girl called Musa.

---

[1] *Dialog.*, Lib. IV., cap. 17.

I quote such stories as these, not because I feel sure that in all respects they correspond with reality —obviously it is impossible at this distance of time to test the evidence upon which they were originally accepted and narrated—but because they show the mental and spiritual attitude of the Fathers towards such supernatural phenomena, and prepare the way for us to examine similar narratives, the evidence of the truth of which we are generally able to examine closely, since the events occurred in our own days, when critical enquiry is exercised on all subjects, and is everywhere in the very air we breathe.

State of religion in France at the beginning of last century.

At the opening of the nineteenth century religion appeared all but to have vanished from the pleasant land of France. The great Revolution had, it would seem, done an even more deadly work in France than the Protestant Reformation had effected in Germany and England. The Reformation had at least preserved belief in God and Christ, the Revolution had attacked and seemingly uprooted all religion, natural as well as revealed, from the minds and hearts of the people. Not only had the Image of Christ Crucified been removed from the Courts of Law, but the very Name of the Creator had been effaced from the school-books. All Christian worship had been proscribed, all Christian teaching was an offence against the State. The official restoration of Catholicism under Napoleon, rendered necessary by the appalling condition into which the country had fallen, came—it was feared—too late. When the nineteenth century dawned, the Catholic Religion was, it is true, once again externally in the land. Mass was once more said in the churches, sermons were once more preached—but there were but few of the Faithful left either to hear Mass or to listen to sermons. The Faith seemed to have lost its hold over men's affections, and its power over their minds and conscience. We now know that what seemed to be lifeless required only the touch of the Hand of God that it might arise from the sleep that held it inert and captive, to a new life full of vigour and promise. The history of the last hundred years in France has been the history of the gradual but sure awakening of Catholic belief and practice in the land. Storm after storm arose against religion, each of which testified to its vitality. After every attack the Church was seen to be stronger than before its coming. This revival of Catholicism has, under God, been due in great measure to Visions of our Lady which have thrilled the heart of all that is noblest and most chivalrous in France to love and enthusiasm for our Lord and His Virgin Mother.

Five Apparitions of our Lady in France.

I propose to state in barest outline—the space at my disposal renders anything more impossible—a few of the phenomena which accompanied the five great Apparitions granted to France in the nineteenth century—the first in Paris to a Sister of Charity in 1830, the next three to children at La Salette, Lourdes and Pontmain in 1846, 1850 and 1871 respectively, and the last to a domestic servant at Pellevoisin in 1876.[1]

The Miraculous Medal.

Katharine Labouré was the daughter of a Burgundian peasant. She was not able to read or write at the time when she was made aware by supernatural means that St. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Congregation of the Sisters of Charity, was calling her to enter that holy Institute. She was still a Novice in the Mother-house in the Rue de Bac at Paris, when the three visions were granted her, from which sprang the Medal now known throughout the Catholic world as "Miraculous." It was on July 18, 1830, the Feast of St. Vincent, and Sister Katharine was praying alone in the chapel, when suddenly it was ablaze with light, and she saw a female figure of exceeding beauty enter and take her seat on the left side of the Sanctuary. There then ensued a conversation which the Sister subsequently, in obedience to her Confessor, committed to writing. The heavenly visitant told the highly favoured Novice that in all her troubles she was to throw herself before the altar, and that there she should receive all the consolation that she needed. She added that she was about to entrust her child with a Mission, for the times were evil—troubles were to come upon France, the monarchy would be overthrown, and the whole world would be overwhelmed with misfortunes of every kind—there would be victims amongst the Paris clergy—the Archbishop would die—the cross would be overturned and men would open our Lord's side afresh—the whole world would be in trouble. Katharine tells us that she asked within herself, when all this would happen, and an interior voice answered: "In forty years' time." Forty years later exactly the Commune held sway in Paris, the Archbishop, together with other clergy, was massacred, and the prophecy (committed to writing many years previously) was fulfilled.

---

[1] For a detailed account of these Visions I would refer my readers to *The Blessed Virgin in the Nineteenth Century*, by Bernard St. John (Messrs. Burns and Oates).

About four months had passed after her first vision when, on November 17, Sister Katharine was once again alone in the chapel, making her evening meditation. Once again she saw our Lady, now on the right side of the Sanctuary, standing on half a a globe and holding another globe in her hands We will quote from the Sister's written account:

> "Our Lady's eyes were cast upwards and her face became as it were illumined, while she offered the globe to our Lord. Suddenly her fingers appeared covered with rings of precious stones, the rays from which shed such brilliancy around that soon her dress and feet became lost in the blaze of light. The gems were of different sizes and the rays

> emitted from them were consequently more or less brilliant—I cannot express what I felt or all I learnt in so short a time. As I was absorbed in contemplating her, the Blessed Virgin looked at me, and an interior voice the while said, 'This globe which you see represents the world in general and France in particular.' The beauty and brilliancy of the rays as I then saw them cannot be described. The Blessed Virgin added: 'These rays are a symbol of the graces which I obtain for those who ask them of me.' Soon, an oval outline framing the picture of our Lady from the waist upwards assumed shape, the outline being formed by the words in gold: '*O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee.*' Then," continues the Sister in her recital, "a voice said to me: 'Have a medal struck according to this model. All who wear it will receive great graces. Graces will be showered in abundance on those who have confidence.'"

Suddenly the scene before Katharine seemed to turn round and she saw now the letter *M* surmounted by a cross, and below it two hearts, the one encircled by a crown of thorns, the other pierced with a spear. Ten days later in the same place and at the same hour the vision was repeated with slight variation—once more she saw the picture with its two sides, and once more she heard the words: "Have a medal struck according to this model." The result is the Medal of the Immaculate Conception, known all over the world as the Miraculous Medal, in consequence of the innumerable graces of soul and body, many of them miraculous, which God in His Mercy has granted to those who have worn this medal, trusting in the all-powerful intercession of His Blessed Mother.

The Story of Alphonse Ratisbonne.

Amongst the conversions effected through the Miraculous Medal one of the most remarkable is that of the Jew Alphonse Ratisbonne. Alphonse Ratisbonne, a Jew of good family, found himself in Rome in 1842 on his way to the East. At the time he was much embittered against Christianity in consequence of the recent conversion of his brother Theodore, who was already a priest in Paris. It happened, however, that Alphonse Ratisbonne had several fervent Catholic friends in Rome at the time. One of them, a Baron Theodore de Busnière, induced him, at first against his will, to accept the gift of a Miraculous Medal; another, the Marquis de la Ferronays, whom the readers of *Recit d'une sœur* will remember as the father of Mrs. Augustus Craven, died suddenly, after predicting that M. Ratisbonne, for whom many prayers were being said, would become a Catholic. Next day M. de Busnière met Ratisbonne in the street and asked his friend to wait for him in the church of S. Andrea delle Fratte, whilst he went into the sacristy to arrange for the funeral of M. de la Ferronays. After a delay of twelve minutes M. de Busnière, on leaving the sacristy, found Alphonse Ratisbonne prostrate on his face in the chapel of St. Michael. When he raised himself, all that he would say was: "How M. de la Ferronays must have prayed for me." He then took out the medal, which he had received so reluctantly, kissed it again and again, saying: "How good God is; what joy until now unknown! How great is my happiness! How are they to be pitied who do not believe!" He demanded to be taken to see a priest, and then falling on his knees, once again pressing the medal to his lips, declared aloud: "I have seen her—I have seen her." He then made the following statement: "I had been but a minute or two in the church when I became a prey to an indescribable feeling of distress. When I looked up the whole building around me seemed to have disappeared. I could only see one chapel, which had, as it were, gathered all light unto itself, and there in the midst of the light, standing on an altar, beautiful and majestic, was the Blessed Virgin Mary as represented on this medal." (It may be well to say that there was no picture or statue of our Lady in this chapel.) "I was drawn towards her as by an irresistible impulse. She made a sign to me to kneel down, and then seemed to say: 'That is well' (*C'est bien*). She did not speak, but I understood everything."

As a matter of fact, it was discovered that this Jew, whose soul had less than a short hour ago been filled with rancour against the religion which he hated so bitterly, though he knew nothing of its true teaching, was suddenly so well acquainted with the

Mysteries of Catholicism that he needed no further instruction, but could be baptised immediately. It is a conversion which in its instantaneousness recalls that of the great son of Israel, who stricken down on the road to Damascus, full of bitterness against the followers of Jesus Christ, received in a moment from our Lord the knowledge of the sublime truths of which during the rest of his life he was to be the Apostle. The same Most Holy Virgin who had enlightened Gregory the Wonderworker with the Creed, taught in a moment her servant Alphonse Ratisbonne all that it was needful for him to know of the Heavenly Doctrine. Pope Gregory XVI. caused a canonical investigation to be made of all the facts, with the result that Cardinal Patrizi made a public declaration that "the perfect and instantaneous conversion of Alphonse Marie Ratisbonne from Judaism to the Catholic Faith was a true and signal miracle wrought by the all-good and all-great God through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

M. Ratisbonne followed the example of his brother Theodore in becoming a priest. Together the two brothers founded the work known as that of our Lady of Sion, from which were born two religious congregations, one of men, the other of women, now spread all over the world, devoted to prayer and good works for the conversion of Israel to the Faith.

At La Salette, on a mountain in the Alps, and at Lourdes, a hamlet in the Pyrenees, our Lady appeared to innocent and unlettered children, in each case with a message that should go literally to the ends of the world; at Pontmain she showed herself once more to peasant children—in this case proclaiming the end of the sorrows that were then afflicting the heart of France.

Visions of our Lady to children.

At the base of Mount Gargas the children Maximin Giraud and Mélanie Calvat had been tending their master's cows as usual during the morning of September 19, 1846. In the middle of the day they had their meal of rye bread dipped in the water of a stream known as the *Fontaine des hommes*, then they slept awhile, lying upon the grass. Close by there was another mountain torrent which flowed into the ravine, called the *Fontaine des bêtes*, whilst close by these was the dried-up bed of yet another stream, the *Petite Fontaine*, which flowed at certain seasons only. Suddenly Mélanie woke from her siesta, startled and seized with fear because her cows were nowhere to be seen. Together with Maximin she set out to search for the animals. Having found them safely at a little distance, the two children returned for their baskets, when they beheld—first Mélanie, then Maximin—a globe of light more wonderful, it seemed, than that of the sun, though of a different kind. As they looked the

La Salette.

luminous globe appeared to open. They then saw within the radiance the majestic figure of a Lady, sitting on a heap of stones which they had recently piled in the Petite Fontaine, of which I have just written. The heavenly figure then spoke to the children of the sins of France, especially of the blasphemous language and neglect of Sunday Mass which at the time were calling down God's punishments on the neighbouring countryside, reminded Maximin of an incident in his life which he had completely forgotten, committed two secrets to their keeping, and ordered them to communicate everything else which she had said "to all my people." Then, gradually, still surrounded by light, the Lady ascended into the air until she vanished from their sight. When the children had recovered the use of their speech, Mélanie said to Maximin: "It must be the good God, or the Blessed Virgin, or some great Saint." "If I had known that," replied Maximin simply, "I would have asked her to take me with her!"

The Lady foretold various calamities which soon came to pass as she had said. As a direct result of this and of the wonderful vision, there was a great movement of conversion in the whole neighbourhood to virtuous living and to the practice of religion, a beautiful basilica was soon erected on Mount Gargas, and ever since the Faithful have gone in thousands each year in pilgrimage to the holy mountain, whilst miracles of bodily healing beyond number have been worked in favour of those who have invoked with confidence our Lady of La Salette. Maximin and Mélanie absolutely refused to reveal their secrets, until at last they consented, when they understood that the Church had a right to demand this at their hands, to make them known only to the Pope. It should be added that the stream where our Lady appeared, until then dry excepting during a few months of the year, was seen the next day to be flowing with water at a time of great drought. From that time to this it has continued to flow without the intermission of a single hour.

It has often been said that the holy Curé d'Ars disbelieved in the truth of the vision of La Salette. The facts are these—Maximin always refused to say that the Lady who appeared to him was the Blessed Virgin. This conclusion he left others to draw. All that he could say with certainty was that it was "a Beautiful Lady." Maximin was taken to see the Curé d'Ars, who asked him at once whether he had seen the Blessed Virgin. "I do not know whether I have seen her," was the disconcerting reply, "I saw someone—a Lady—if you know that it was the Blessed Virgin, tell the people so, in order that they may believe in La Salette." Maximin, it should be explained, had been told that the holy Curé was so enlightened by heaven, that he would certainly know supernaturally the truth about La Salette. Consequently, the boy thought that the saintly priest would be able to do that which he, a simple lad, could not do, explain to everyone that his Beautiful Lady was indeed the Mother of God. The Curé d'Ars, however, mistakenly thought that he was listening to a retractation. For the following eight years he was much troubled on the subject, but when his doubts were at length dispersed (as he believed supernaturally) he declared that it was "as if his back had been delivered from a sack of lead." What happened at Ars, by establishing the veracity of Maximin Giraud, far from weakening rather strengthened the evidence for La Salette.

At La Salette our Lady appeared to two children, at Lourdes to one—the child Bernadette Soubirous, afterwards a Professed Sister of Charity of Nevers, whose body was lately on exhumation discovered to be incorrupt, and the cause of whose Beatification is now before the Church.

Lourdes.

With regard to the visions of our Lady at Lourdes, I feel that I would rather make no attempt to describe them, unless I were able to do so at some length. Unhappily for me, this is not possible—it would be outside the scope and plan of this work; happily, however, for my readers, it is not necessary, as popular books on Lourdes are within the reach of all.

The very name of Lourdes sounds like a note of heavenly music in the ear. To me, after the Incarnation and the Life of our Lord in Palestine, there has never been anything which has happened in this world that is so fascinating, so touching as the apparitions of Mary to Bernadette and the perpetua wonder that surrounds with a divine charm the Holy Grotto amidst the Pyrenees. I can read the story of Lourdes again and again without ever being wearied for a moment. The simplicity and obedience of the child, so dear to God, the wooden opposition of the civil authorities, the scepticism of medical men, convinced one after another against their will, the wise holding back of the clergy—on the advice of the Bishop, whilst thousands of people were gathered together each day by the Rock, not a priest was to be seen on the spot—the ecstasy during which for a quarter of an hour the flame of the lighted candle sped upwards visibly through the open fingers of Bernadette's hand, leaving (when examined by a doctor who was present and timed her ecstasy watch in hand) no sign of the action of the fire, the sudden advent of the unsuspected stream, at the command of Mary Immaculate, for the healing of the nations, the miracles without number or compare, combine to form a picture that has no parallel in the history of the world. Small wonder that Bernadette, when she visited Lourdes, to bid her farewell for the last time before entering Religion, said simply, "This Grotto was my Heaven." I would entreat any who may be reaching after God if haply they may find Him—shivering on the brink of the plunge into Catholicism, which is in truth a plunge into the encircling arms of God—above all, I would implore those whose hold upon unseen truths may be relaxing, to read the story of Lourdes and examine the facts for themselves. If this is done honestly and dispassionately I believe that there can be but one result.

There are learned books written by medical men dealing with many of the great miracles on the scientific side. Such with confidence may be recommended to the notice of physicians and surgeons. And if a pilgrimage to the Holy Grotto be possible, the records of all the miracles worked at Lourdes are preserved at the *Bureau de Constatations*, and may at any moment be examined. For those of us who have no technical knowledge of the nature of disease and the art of healing, or who are unable to visit Lourdes except in spirit, it is enough to be sure that again and again consumptives have been cured at the very last stage of their malady, that those apparently about to die have been suddenly healed after being plunged into the cold water of the piscina, that those pronounced by skilled doctors to be hopelessly blind have at Lourdes recovered their sight in a moment, that the fractured parts of a broken bone have been found by medical examination made after death (as in the case of De Ridder) to have been, after prayer to our Lady, instantaneously joined together, that varicose veins and lupus (left to themselves declared by medical authority to be incurable) have been spontaneously and immediately healed by the application of water from Lourdes, and the like. In 1897 the twenty-fifth French National Pilgrimage came to Lourdes. On August 23 of that year more than three hundred persons walked together in the Procession of the Blessed Sacrament, many clothed in white and blue, all of whom had been miraculously cured by our Lady of Lourdes. In the long line of the procession walked more than a thousand priests, followed by the Bishop of Tarenbaise, carrying the Blessed Sacrament. As the Sacred Host was borne in front of the Church of the Rosary, it passed along a long line of sick, waiting and longing each one for a cure. Contrary, however, to the hopes of so many, when Benediction had been given with the Blessed Sacrament, not a single cure had been granted. After Benediction Father Picard, Superior of the Augustinians of the Assumption, came forward to close the ceremony, as is usual, with the Papal Blessing. He then urged the sick below him not to be discouraged, but to renew their faith and confidence in God. In a moment the poor people who until then were lying helpless on their couches rose cured, until in two hours forty-one had risen, leaving pallets and stretchers behind them. As of old, so once again, in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth they rose up and walked. Amongst these cures there were many impossible to be accounted for by any theory of "suggestion"—unless by suggestion is meant the power of faith to do that which it is impossible for any earthly power or science to achieve. At Lourdes the wall that divides the natural and the supernatural seems almost to disappear, and more nearly perhaps than anywhere else in the world, heaven is seen to touch the earth. For myself—so far as it is lawful I say it—I believe in Lourdes as I believe in the Creed. Both come from God and from God alone.

Vision of our Lady at Pontmain.

Pontmain is a small hamlet in the Diocese of Laval, between Brittany and Mayenne. On January 17, 1871, it was hourly expected that the victorious German soldiery, under General Schmidt, would enter Laval and sweep through Brittany, which so far had been saved from their depredations. That night the commander of the Prussian forces, who had taken up his quarters at the archiepiscopal palace of Le Mans, said to the Archbishop: "By this time my troops are in Laval." The sum to be levied upon the town had already been fixed at three million francs. On that same evening, at half-past five o'clock, the Prussian soldiers in sight of Laval stopped suddenly, turned backwards, and were doomed never to take an onward step. Laval was saved in a way that has never been explained, as Paris was to be saved from the same enemy some forty-three years later. There are forces at work in the supernatural order with which even German forethought cannot cope. At the very hour when the Prussians changed their purpose, and turned away from their prey at Laval—it was half-past five in the evening—a few miles off, at Pontmain, two boys, called Eugène and Joseph Bernadette, twelve and ten years old respectively, were at work with their father breaking up gorse as food for cattle. Eugène, the elder of the two, went to the door of the barn to see, as he said afterwards, what the weather was like, when suddenly in the air over his head there appeared the figure of a beautiful Lady (*une grande belle dame*). The father, with his younger son and a neighbour, who were inside the house at the time, coming out, Joseph immediately saw the same sight as his brother. This vision lasted for more than three hours. It was seen also by two little girls and a child of six, but by no grown-up people. The children's father and mother, their servant, the parish priest, some nuns and neighbours, were all gathered round the children, but none saw the heavenly vision, though all were convinced in the end by the clear statements of the children, who could not all have suffered in the same manner from mere hallucination. Lack of space makes it impossible for me to describe how these children were tested in various manners, or how convincing was their concordant testimony.[1] Soon they saw beneath the feet of the Apparition what looked like a band of white linen, on which the Lady, who was surely "a Great Wonder in Heaven," spelt out in letters of gold various messages to her children. One of them ran as follows: "God will speedily hear your prayers" (*Dieu vous exauçera en peu de temps*). It was Mary's message of consolation and answer to prayers that were rising to her throne in Heaven from all parts of France. Again, for a wonderful moment, the Lady showed her children a large red Cross in the sky, bearing an Image of the Crucified, towards which she seemed to incline her head in supplication. During these marvellous happenings, for three hours, prayers and hymns to our Lord and His Blessed Mother were rising from the lips of the assembled peasants at Pontmain, led by their parish priest. At last, at a quarter to nine in the evening, "the four children, with their eyes constantly fixed on the sky, saw a white sheet or veil appear beneath the feet of the Apparition. It seemed as a roll slowly unfolding as it ascended. When it reached about the waist of the celestial figure it stopped for a few seconds. Then the upward movement continued, to stop again, this time at just below the head, and for fewer seconds than before. A last glimpse of the face with its radiant smile was vouchsafed to the four children below. Then the obliterating veil continued to roll upward, stopping for a moment at the base of the crown. Another moment and all was over."[1]

---

[1] For this see *The Blessed Virgin in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 337-372.

That same evening the Church of Notre Dame des Victoires at Paris was crowded with a congregation already suffering from the pangs of famine. It was the first day of a solemn *Triduo*, to be followed by a *Novena*, ordered by the Archbishop to implore the cessation of hostilities. The preacher that night, suddenly moved as it seemed by a sudden impulse, cried out: "We will all now implore the help of the Blessed Virgin, and we will not leave this temple consecrated to her glory without having solemnly promised her a silver *ex voto*, which shall tell to future generations how on this evening, between eight and nine o'clock, a whole people prostrate at her feet was saved." All who listened were thrilled; on the spot offerings were made for the *ex voto*, which can be seen in the church to-day. The congregation poured out of the church at a quarter to nine, the moment when the Apparition was vanishing from Pontmain. The armistice was signed twelve days subsequently—the closing day of the great *Novena*. The words that had been written in the skies were fulfilled; in a short time God had heard the prayers of His people.

Of the five children who witnessed the Apparition at Pontmain, the youngest died within a year ; on his deathbed, before making his first Communion, he declared again that he had spoken the truth as to all that he had seen on the wonderful night. Both the boys became priests—Joseph as a priest wrote a full account of the Apparition, which was published under the title *Recit d'un Voyant*—one of the girls became a nun and the other a schoolmistress. A beautiful basilica has been built at Pontmain, which has become a celebrated shrine and place of pilgrimage. Some of the miraculous cures worked at Pontmain recall those of Lourdes. Amongst the more remarkable are those of a boy aged thirteen, named Eugène Durenne, who had been for more than a year deaf and dumb after an attack of meningitis. This child was continually invoking our Lady and writing little notes to his parents, begging to be taken to Pontmain. At last his wishes were acceded to, and after prayer at the shrine he was suddenly and completely cured. The medical man, a M. Daniel, who had attended the boy during the previous year, gave the following certificate: "I am convinced that a state of total deafness, occasioning total loss of speech, which, being the consequence of an illness, acute and non-nervous, that in the course of the preceding year had shown no sign of yielding to medical treatment, could not, according to Nature's laws, suddenly give place to a state in which the organs of hearing and speech are perfect. I have no hesitation, therefore, in considering this sudden and complete cure to partake of the character of one that is supernatural."[1]

---

[1] *The Blessed Virgin in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 364.

Pellevoisin.

Pellevoisin, a small township in the department of the Indre, has become famous through the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin to Estelle Faguet. In the spring of 1876 Estelle was thought to be dying at Pellevoisin. For twelve years she had suffered from an internal tumour. She was now judged by the doctors to be in the last stage of pulmonary consumption. Her condition was also complicated by acute peritonitis. A holy girl, she had attempted to be a Nun, but ill-health had made this impossible. On leaving the Convent she had entered the service of the Countess de la Rochefoucauld. On February 10, since her ordinary medical attendant, a Dr. Bernard, had said that it was useless for him to waste his time in going to see her, another physician, a Dr. Hubert, visited her in his place, but having made his examination, pronounced that her lungs were cavernous, and that it was useless to torture her further with medicine, as she had only two or three hours to live. Estelle overheard these words. Had it not been that she was the only support of her poor and aged parents, she would have been perfectly content to die, but she had written a petition to the Blessed Virgin, which she had caused to be placed beneath a statue of our Lady of Lourdes: "Behold my parents' sorrow. O Mary, you know that I am their all. If because of my sins I cannot be completely cured, you can at least obtain for me a little strength of body, so that I may be able to earn my living and provide for the needs of my father and mother, who, as you see, are on the eve of being obliged to beg their bread. The thought of this causes me intense suffering. I put my trust in you, my Mother. I know that if you wish it, your Son will cure me. . . . May He restore me to health if such be His good pleasure. If not, may His Holy Will be done." The faith and confidence of Estelle were to be marvellously rewarded. Of the fifteen visions of our Lady with which she was favoured, five in the month of February were connected with her restoration to perfect health. A few nights after the doctor had declared that the poor young woman had but a few hours to live, and for five nights in succession, Estelle Faguet gazed upon a figure of surpassing loveliness, surrounded by a halo of soft light. First it appeared at the foot of her bed, clothed in a white flowing garment with white girdle and white veil. The Apparition spoke words of surpassing sweetness: "Have courage and patience. You will have to suffer five days longer in honour of my Son's Five Wounds. On Saturday you will either die or be restored to health. If my Son grants you life, I wish you to proclaim my glory." The next night Estelle was told definitely that she would be well on the Saturday. Amongst other words to which she listened, she heard these: "Think not that on being restored to life you will be exempt from suffering. It is in suffering that the merit of life consists." Meanwhile there were no signs of any recovery, and the parish priest, to whom, as her spiritual father, Estelle told all that had occurred, was, perhaps naturally, sceptical. On the Friday night Estelle was thought to be on the point of death. The next morning she declared to the priest who visited her that she was cured. Appearances, however, seemed to say otherwise. She was still in bed and her right arm still lay helpless by her side, paralysed and swollen to double its normal size. The priest, still sceptical, told Estelle that he would bring her Holy Communion, adding the words: "The Blessed Virgin can obtain your cure if she will. As soon as you have received the Blessed Sacrament, try to make the sign of the Cross with your right hand. If you succeed, it will be a sign that what you say is true." Estelle shortly afterwards received Communion. About twelve persons were present in the room. As commanded, she made the sign of the Cross with the hand till then swollen and helpless. It too now was healed. The rest of her bodily restoration to perfect health had, it was discovered, already taken place. She herself said that it was about half-past twelve in the night—early on the Saturday morning—when she knew that she had been suddenly and completely cured. The prediction had been fulfilled. It was found that the tumour, of twelve years' growth, which lately had considerably increased in size, had disappeared, leaving no trace—all pain had ceased, and the lungs were once more sound and healthy. Shortly after her Communion Estelle rose, dressed herself, laughed gaily, and ate solid food with a good appetite. Since then she has enjoyed in all respects perfect health. The two doctors who had attended her did not hesitate to bear witness to the extraordinary nature of her cure. Dr. Bernard affirmed that it was of a nature to upset all medical prognostics. Dr. Hubert declared, as was evident, that it could be explained by no natural laws.

---

[1] Perhaps even more remarkable were the cures of Perrine Reuglan of cancer, and of Marie Vaugeois of what are known as *scoliosis* and *osteomalacia*. But for an account of these and other wonderful cures I can only refer my readers once more to *The Blessed Virgin in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 386-398.

Ten further visions of our Lady were subsequently granted to Estelle. The first of them took place on the evening of July 1, and the last, after High Mass, on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. At this last Apparition fifteen persons were present, including the Countess de la Rochefoucauld, who has founded a Dominican Convent at Pellevoisin, in the hope that liturgical worship might never cease on the spot where God had manifested His goodness to her servant Estelle. With regard to these last visions, space only permits me to say that they concern mainly a Revelation, that Estelle believes to have had made to her, of a Scapular of the Sacred Heart, which was shown her by the Blessed Virgin, with the desire that it should be propagated amongst the Faithful. This scapular consists of two squares of white flannel; one displays a representation of the Sacred Heart of our Lord, together with certain insignia of the Passion, the other showing our Lady according to Estelle's visions. In the year 1900 the Bishop of Orleans and the Duchesse d'Estissac brought Estelle to Rome, and introduced her to the presence of Leo XIII. The Pontiff desired to be left alone with his humble visitor, whom he addressed as "Figlia Stella." Estelle afterwards related that the Pope said to her: "Now tell me about France." "Holy Father," she replied, "the Blessed Virgin said that France would have to suffer." "Yes," answered the Pontiff, "France will have to suffer." As a result of this interview the Scapular of the Sacred Heart was approved by the Holy See. Since then it has been widely distributed, as it is believed to the advantage of souls who are thus drawn to the constant remembrance and a deeper love of the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and of His Holy Mother.

Five times during the last century the Blessed Virgin seems to have spoken solemnly to France. In all these heavenly communications there appears what we may perhaps call a family likeness. Three times she spoke to innocent children, once to a Sister of Charity unlettered and simple, once to a lady's maid. In each case there is the same deliberate choice of the weak things of this world to confound the strong, in each case we are reminded of the words spoken by the Mother of God in the house of Elisabeth: "He hath put down the mighty from their seat, He hath exalted the humble and the meek," and of the words of her Divine Son, "I give Thee thanks, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, that Thou hast hidden these things from the great ones of this world and hast revealed them to babes and sucklings; for so it has seemed good in Thy sight." "From the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord hath made His promises perfect over His enemies."

In these French Apparitions our Lady appeared to the simple of heart.

We have to make our choice—I reiterate it once again—it is not that we are in any way bound to accept this or that reported incident, or any word that our Lady is alleged to have spoken. But we are bound to choose in whose ranks we would stand. On the one side are ranged those who scoff at the miraculous, the supernatural, the idea that God punishes sin even in this life, the belief that suffering may be expiatory; on the other, those who still believe in the Catholic Faith and in the possibility of Heaven communicating directly with the earth. For Catholics everything is harmonious

The choice to be made.

in their religion, the same great lessons of Faith inspiring them ever with confidence in the aid that comes from heaven—for more are they that are with us than they that are against us.

Our Lady and France.

We may, then, take comfort for ourselves and for France. France indeed has suffered in these last days more than any of her children can have imagined possible. But she will yet rise from her bed of suffering, purified and rejoicing in the strength of a resurrection that shall multiply a thousandfold her old-time glories. It can hardly be without significance that these apparitions of the nineteenth century were granted, not to Catholic Spain, nor to martyred Poland, nor even to Italy so devoted to the Madonna, nor to any other land—but only to France. Our Lady has thus testified that France, still the eldest daughter of the Church, is specially dear to her maternal heart. And for us all, who believe, one lesson at least can never be forgotten. The God of our fathers sleepeth not, but watcheth still over His people. God is wonderful in His Mother, and in His Saints.

CHAPTER XXII

THE NATURE OF TRUE DEVOTION TO MARY

Vota mea Domino reddam, coram omni populo Eius. O Domine quia ego servus Tuus, ego servus Tuus et filius Ancillæ Tuæ.—Ps. cxv. 16.

On analysis it will be found that true devotion to our Lady consists essentially of three elements—honour, prayer and imitation. The honour we owe to Mary springs from our faith; the invocation of Mary is the result of the hope which we place in her powerful intercession; the attempt, at a far distance, to imitate Mary is the inevitable outcome of the love that we bear our sinless Mother. So this chapter naturally divides itself into three sections.

I. The Honour due to our Lady

We must bear steadily in mind the great principle that Catholics cannot possibly honour the Mother of God too much, nay, more, that they cannot possibly honour her as much as she deserves to be honoured—that, though they should honour her more and more each day that passes, still at the end of life they will know that they have failed to honour her with the honour that is her due; for the measure of the honour that is due to Mary is the honour that was rendered her by God when He became her Son.

The principle underlying honour rendered by Catholics to the Mother of God.

We honour the Prophets who foretold the coming of Christ, His Precursor, His undaunted Martyrs, the Virgins who follow His steps whithersoever He goeth, Joseph, His foster-father; what honour, then, belongs to the Martyrs', and the Virgins', and the Apostles' Queen—to her whom the unborn Baptist greeted—to Joseph's spouse, who is also the Bride of the Holy Ghost—to the peerless Mother of God?

I have written that Catholics cannot possibly honour the Blessed Virgin too much, and I would add to Catholics all those (though unhappily they may be outside the visible unity of the Church) who hold the Catholic Faith as to the Incarnation. No doubt it might be possible for others, after the fashion of extinct Collyridians, to create an idol in the mind—a mere figment of the imagination without real existence, a goddess—that is a being not created by the one true God—and then to call her Mary the Virgin; but such a Mary (even though it be blasphemously stated that she gave birth to Christ)

---

[1] Prov. x. 1.

[2] Hom. IV., *In Luc.*

would not be the Mary whom Catholics worship—the pure creature raised by her Creator to the most sublime dignity it is possible to contemplate, yet owing all that she possesses to the grace of her Lord and Saviour.

Catholics have been taught to regard our Lady always in her relation to God. As we cannot rightly think of Jesus apart from His Mother—at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, on Calvary, in Heaven—so is it impossible to think of Mary apart from her Divine Son. In her images for the most part we see her Lord in her arms, and if sometimes we see her standing alone as the Immaculate Virgin, or as wrapt in prayer, we know that her Son is never absent from her thoughts. Devotion to Mary can never be regarded by a Catholic as an end in itself. All Catholic devotion to Mary terminates in God. It can, therefore, never lead to "extravagance"—that is, in the literal meaning of the word, to wandering out of the way. As Mary was God's way to man, so is Mary man's way to God. She leads us to Jesus, who is Himself the Way, as He is the Truth and the Life. We honour Mary as God's great masterpiece in creation; we throw ourselves into Mary's arms that she may bring us closer to her Child, beseeching her to show Him to us hereafter, as of old she showed Him to the shepherds and the kings.

It is sometimes said by the enemies of our religion that educated Catholics may escape the danger of idolatry in this matter, but that uneducated Catholics—for example, those who are unable to read or write—are sure to fall into idolatry and perish. If you ask why "uneducated" Catholics should be specially liable to mistake the creature for the Creator, you will get no answer to your question. For my part, I have had in my life to do with many uneducated Catholics in various parts of the world—I have watched closely and had converse with white men of various nationalities, with black men and with yellow—numbers of them quite ignorant of letters and hopelessly incapable of learning—but I have never known a Catholic who was in any danger of honouring our Lady too much, or could have done so if he had tried, any more than I could myself. The thing is absolutely impossible so long as the elementary teaching of the Catechism is remembered. There is but one God, the Maker of Heaven and earth and of all that they contain, and consequently of Mary. He is also her Redeemer, and to Him alone she owes her sanctification. If anyone denies these elementary truths, or any one of them, that man may easily honour the creature unduly, but then he will already have ceased to be a Catholic. The external honour that very humble and, it may be, very ignorant Catholics—too simple to care for human respect—may be seen to show, in their great devotion, to Mary's images will certainly

Uneducated Catholics and the honour due to our Lady.

deepen their adoration of Mary's Lord, who raised her to such an intimate relation with Himself. For a stranger to the inwardness of our religion to judge by external appearances—to judge Catholics as if they were Protestants, too often without any definite Faith—is to fall at once into a snare, and inevitably to form an incorrect judgment. The Protestant stranger will judge the religious acts of the Catholic as he would judge those acts in himself were he to indulge in them without the Faith that animates them and from which they spring. This is surely the direct path to delusion. Catholics, poor as well as rich, honour the holy Virgin because God has done so much for her; because He is infinite in His attributes, and yet has united her so ineffably to Himself; because He has made her immaculate in her conception and virgin in her motherhood; because He has exalted her to His side; because He delights to listen to her prayers, and has made her so tender and loving that she might care for the members of His Body in their weakness, as once she cared for Himself in Bethlehem and at Nazareth. In a word, the honour rendered to our Lady is the outcome of the Catholic Faith. Without a knowledge of that Faith in all its fulness and harmony—without a certain measure of sympathy for Catholicism—it is generally found to be impossible in practice to judge Catholics fairly or to understand their religion at all.

The danger of Idolatry.

As for danger of idolatry, I believe that well-to-do and, it may be, highly educated Catholics are far more likely to fall into this sin than are those who are poor in this world's goods and altogether without human learning. Idolatry consists in placing some creature in the place of the Creator and giving to that creature the due of the Creator. No Catholic, remaining a Catholic, has it in his power thus to act towards Mary, but all Catholics are capable of thus acting towards money, or towards the esteem of their fellow-men, or towards the pleasures of the flesh, or towards their own undisciplined wills and cupidities. There is no danger for any of us of *Mariolatry;* there is real danger for us all of—to coin another barbarous word—what I may call *Egoolatry*, but into this danger simple folk are far less prone to fall, or will fall far less deeply than those whose lives are complex. God in truth is a jealous God, and will have no gods beside Him. If we would come to Him, we must needs break down all our idols. In other words, God is jealous of sins which shut His children out from the vision of their Father, but He is not jealous of pure affections that help to unite us to Him, who is the source from whom those affections spring.

To argue that our Lord is jealous of the honour paid to His Mother is to utter (unthinkingly no doubt) what is in itself one of the most terrible of blasphemies. Our Lord is True Man as well as

True God. It can hardly be meant that, *as Man*, He who is our One Supreme Example—from the standard of whose Life there lies no possible appeal—is "jealous" of the honour given to His own Mother! In that case it would be right for us to be jealous of honour paid to our mothers, a suggestion from which every decent man will shrink with horror.

Honour paid to a mother is regarded by every son as his own—to dishonour his mother would be to render him the deadliest insult. Jealousy, regarded as a monstrous human vice, certainly in no way belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ. It must therefore—I suppose—be meant that, *as God*, Christ is "jealous" of the honour we pay to His Mother This could only conceivably be the case if that honour drew us away from Him, but all experience proves—every Catholic knows it—that the direct opposite is the fact—that all honour given to our Lady is the result of meditation on supernatural truths revealed by God, is rendered to Mary for the sake of God, and deepens in our hearts the conception of the Majesty of God, of His inalienable rights over the lives of all His creatures, and of His Infinite Perfections.

Danger of being misunderstood by Protestants.

But, though I am intimately convinced that there is no danger for Catholics lest they honour our Lady unduly, I do think —if I may be allowed to say it by way of digression—that there is a danger sometimes lest we Priests should forget the prejudices and confusion of thought (arising from ignorance of our religion) that in this matter will exist in the minds of many people who may be listening to our sermons. Preaching in England, we are not preaching (as we should be were we preaching in Italy or in Spain) solely to Catholics—to those who could not misunderstand us if they would. Surely, we are bound, under our circumstances, to remember that words are only tokens, understood by a recognised convention to represent certain ideas. If there be confusion in any case about the convention, words will be taken in a sense that was not intended by the speaker, and will become false tokens. Moreover, if the speaker ought to have foreseen that his words would be thus misunderstood, he is responsible for the mistake. Many years ago a very holy priest, long since dead, preached a sermon on our Lady; a friend of mine who was present told me afterwards that he had observed two young men sitting near him, obviously Protestants, listening attentively to the discourse. At its end one said to the other: "There can be no doubt about it now. They *do* put the Virgin in the place of Christ." The preacher would have been horrified could he have heard this comment, but one wonders whether he had been sufficiently guarded in his language. I know not—but I do know that in England we all ought to be careful in this matter, and that it is often dangerous for us here to use the language that it would be quite safe to use were we preaching to Spaniards in Madrid. Needless to say that there is no question of keeping back the true doctrine about our Lady, or of neglecting the right of Catholics to have their religion preached to them as fully and completely in London as in Madrid. It is only a matter of choosing words that will convey our ideas correctly to the minds of our audience. For example, I think that twice in this book I have written of the "worship of Mary." I did so because it seemed the most suitable word, and I thought that it was morally impossible for any of my readers to misconceive my meaning. In a book one has space to set out the Catholic doctrine as a whole; in a sermon often one has no time for explanations. However convenient and suitable a word may be in itself, it must be better to sacrifice it in a sermon and substitute a synonym, where by its use there might be even the slightest risk of intensifying the prejudices of even one single soul. We, like the Apostle before us, are "debtors to all men." It is obvious that in all public speaking our object should be to convey true, not false, impressions to our hearers, and that when speaking of our Lady it must be our desire to strengthen devotion, not to turn away were it but one soul, in fear—even in idle fear—lest he should give to the creature what is due to the Creator. St. Alphonsus has written that if any one really believed what Protestants believe about the teaching of the Catholic Church concerning our Lady, it would be a grievous sin for him, in that state of mind, to become a Catholic.[1] The longing of our hearts is surely to remove such a terrible perversion of the truth—our dread, then, should be lest we strengthen, or even possibly create it by careless words, the *true* meaning of which it would have been so easy otherwise to make clear.

It is one of the dangers of extempore speaking that one often says what it gives satisfaction at the moment to say, without sufficient consideration as to its ultimate effect. We priests should surely be careful, when preaching, to say nothing for the mere pleasure of saying it—or merely because we know it to be true—without reflection as to whether the saying of it at that moment will be of real advantage to souls for whom Christ died.

II. PRAYER TO OUR LADY

Confidence in our Lady's intercession leads to prayer.

The honour that we pay to our Lady is the consequence of our Faith. The more earnestly we reflect upon the truths of Faith, the more clear will become the obligation of honouring with all the faculties of our soul the Virgin Mother of our God. Now, faith in our Lady's prerogatives will of necessity lead us on to confidence in our Lady's power and goodness. To labour this point would be to waste time. It is self-evident. Trust in Mary's maternal protection springs from all that we believe concerning the great Mother of God and the loving mother of men. We are taught by our religion that prayer is the key wherewith we may unlock the treasury of Divine grace. The grace of Christ comes to men abundantly through Mary's supplication. It is God's will that we should ask it at her hands.

---

[1] *Cf.* Mor. Theol. ii. 9.

Analogy from the Natural Order.

As in the natural order, children are taught by an instinct that comes from their Creator to run to their mother in all their troubles and necessities, so is it in the order which is supernatural. The impulse that sends Christians to the feet of their mother Mary is a gift from God. The Church, by the encouragement she gives throughout the world to devotion to our Blessed Lady, would have us understand that in this matter our hearts do not lead us astray, but that the voice which whispers to our soul that it should fly in every need to the protection of the Holy Mother of God is a message from our Lord to which we should always yield with gladness—an inspiration from on high, to which we should ever be most careful to give ear.

We believe in the Communion of Saints. To the possibilities of this communion there are no limits. It may be daily, hourly—it may take place every minute of the hour—it may be habitual and unbroken. We do not see our Lady, but we can speak to her when we will. Surely, then, we should exercise this great privilege, and should pray to the Holy Mother of God regularly, frequently, tenderly—above all trustfully, as children may always speak without fear to the best of mothers.

Various devotions to our Lady.

To write in any detail on the various external devotions to our Lady approved by the Church would hardly belong to the scope of this book. All Catholics are familiar with their form. To keep our Lady's Feasts, to visit her Images, to wear her Scapular, to say her Rosary, to make Novenas to her in times of special need, to recite the Angelus—these are well-tried methods of devotion, advised by the Saints and proved by experience to be blessed by God. Of vocal prayers we are exhorted to be faithful at least to the recitation of the Hail Mary every morning and evening of our lives; those of us who are priests and religious bound to choir, recite her antiphons twice each day—for the rest each one is left to his own devotion. In the garden of the Church there are many beautiful flowers. Some should be gathered by all, all can be gathered by none, every individual should cull those which appeal to his own spiritual sense. I should advise all my readers, but especially, if I may say so, converts to the Faith, to be careful not to force themselves to adopt any form of expression which appears unreal to them, and which therefore they are unable to assimilate. We all should accustom ourselves to that which the Church recommends to us all—the Hail Mary and the Litany of our Lady so usual at Benediction—beyond that it is a mistake to travel, unless we can do so without irksomeness or difficulty. Why use some form of verbal expression which may appeal to our neighbours, but which will not help us, so long as we are worried by its phrasing? In this matter however, we should remember that tastes often change with the advance of years. It may well be that after a man has been a Catholic ten years a mode of expression may seem natural, and therefore will be useful to him, which when he first became a Catholic would have jarred on his sense of fitness and plagued him to no good purpose. Throughout life we should be sensible enough to exercise the liberty which in matters of devotion is freely conceded to all her children by the Church.

The use of the Rosary.

Still, I think it right to observe, that there is one form of prayer to our Lady, which though not commanded, yet is so strongly recommended by Popes and Saints, that all Catholics, who wish to be really devout to the Blessed Virgin and to live in harmony with the general sense of the Faithful, should endeavour to make it their own. I refer of course to the Rosary. There are those who say that even after trial they find that the use of beads, far from being an aid to recollected prayer, merely distracts them. If in this they are honest, there is, so far as they are concerned.

nothing more to be said. But experience proves that, ordinarily, this devotion, which so wonderfully joins vocal and mental prayer, grows upon one and serves its purpose better the longer that it is used. At first oftentimes it is irksome, but let anyone persevere in saying five decades every day for a month, and I hardly think that he will willingly relinquish its use when the month is past. On this subject I should like to quote words written by the late Archbishop Ullathorne:

> "The body of the Rosary is the vocal Our Fathers and Hail Marys; its faith and soul is the meditation. The beads, as they are held in the fingers, give escape to nervous restlessness, and so leave the attention more free. Thus, the weakness of the nervous, or restless, or extroverted mind is provided against. Many people can only think freely on a point when in action—walking, for example; their nerves and senses must have employment to free the mind for concentration. . . . The Rosary was the Book of the unlettered before the ages of printing, which familiarized their hearts with the chief mysteries of the Gospel; it is excellent for two classes—for those who like it, and for those who do not like it. Millions of souls have been made contemplative and internally spiritual, in all classes, by its use, who without it could never have become so. . . . Some people do not like to take the medicine which would heal them, and call it nonsense. The Rosary is exactly that 'nonsense' which cures an amazing deal of nonsense. Call it spiritual homœopathy if you like. . . ."[1]

---

[1] *Memoirs of Georgiana, Lady Chatterton*, pp. 251-253.

The recitation of the rosary is a devotion specially dear to the aged. There is no sight more pleasant than to observe old people lingeringly and lovingly saying their beads. Happy we, should we live to an age when active occupation is no longer possible—when we are well-nigh tired out with life, when even reading has lost its interest, or perhaps we have become too blind to read at all—if we can make the long hours seem short by saying the rosary again and again, keeping our minds fixed on the simple mysteries of the Gospel of Christ—upon which all our hopes depend—whilst the Hail Marys fall from our lips, to mount like incense before the Throne of God. But this habit, like all other habits, can only be formed by frequent acts which, when the habit has been once formed, will become easy and pleasurable. Those who neglect to say the rosary in the amplitude of the days of their strength and vigour, can hardly look forward to the enjoyment of its consolations in the eventide of declining years.

The Invocation of our Lady.

But far more important than any external devotion to our Lady is the inward spirit which keeps us in constant communion with our heavenly Mother, teaching us to invoke her help silently throughout the day and above all in the onrush of any sudden temptation that may assail us. Whenever such temptations, whether against faith, or purity, or gentleness, or any other Christian virtue, make known their unwelcome presence, we are safe if we think of Mary and call on Mary in our hearts. We know that whatever be the revolt of our lower appetites, there will be no surrender of the citadel—that is to say, the will—so long as we have mentally renounced the evil and placed our citadel in the custody of the Mother of our Lord. She will never suffer us, so long as we have entrusted our cause to her keeping, to be separated, by wilful revolt, from her Divine Son.

The Apostleship of Prayer.

I have said already that, if we please, communion with our Lady may be unbroken throughout the day. This may be effected by offering all the actions of the day to our Lord by the hands of His Blessed Mother. Such is actually the custom of the tens of thousands of members of the Society, spread throughout the Catholic world, and known as the Apostleship of Prayer, whose characteristic devotion consists simply in consecrating all the thoughts, words, deeds and sufferings of that day to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It is the Catholic doctrine that all things are lawful to me (they may not always be expedient, but they are always lawful), unless I know that they are certainly forbidden by the law of God or of the Church. Most of the everyday actions of life are what is called "indifferent" in themselves, neither good nor bad. Such, for example, are reasonable amusements. Games played deliberately and consciously, not merely for relaxation, but because they are judged to be useful for the health of the body, are, in the natural order, good and praiseworthy actions. When a man performs these "indifferent" actions without any reference to God, he will receive the reward which he sought—the fun of the game, or the vigour of bodily power which he experiences—but he can expect no *supernatural* result. The stream cannot rise above its source. Let him, however, only consecrate them to God, and they are at once supernaturalised and raised to a different order. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do," writes the Apostle, "do all for the glory of God." This offering of the common acts of the day by what is known to Catholics as *The Good Intention* is a heavenly alchemy which turns all that we do, which otherwise would be without merit, into finest gold. And we can offer to God everything, excepting only sin—that which is forbidden by His law. It is obvious that the good intention, if honestly made, will be a great safeguard against offending God. If a man who in the morning has made the offering of all his actions to our Lord be tempted to sin, he will say to himself: "How can I dare do this—I who have offered to the Sacred Heart of Jesus *every* action of this day?" Now this consecration of the whole life, with all its episodes, to our Lord is surely more acceptable in His sight when it comes to Him through Mary, His mother. What we poor sinners do is too often tainted by our imperfections—it is purified in the hands, or if you will change the figure, in the most pure heart of Mary.[1] If we prefer to simplify our offering still further and offer it all directly to our Lady, it will be safe—she keeps nothing that is offered to her for herself, she will hand it on to God.

The Devotions taught by Blessed Grignon de Montfort.

This is the meaning of the devotion preached by Blessed Grignon de Montfort, which many souls find a great aid to sanctification. The formula earnestly inculcated by Blessed Grignon de Montfort runs thus: "All for Jesus through Mary, all by Mary for Jesus." It consists in expressly begging our Lady to take charge of all that we do—in a certain sense to do it for us. Has a man who practises this devotion a difficult work to perform, he will be wonderfully at peace. He will take all natural means open to him to prepare himself for his task—this he knows is God's Will. But when all his preparation is finished he will be at rest. He has placed everything in our Lady's hands, asking her to take his place and act in his stead. This devotion, which (if we feel so drawn) we may practise in all our actions, seems peculiarly appropriate when we are going to Holy Communion. Conscious of our own manifold unworthiness, we turn to the Virgin-Mother, now reigning with her Son in Heaven, who, living once on earth, was as worthy as creature may be to receive her Lord, and beg her to supply our needs. To our Lord we offer His Mother's love, to our mother we cry, praying her to offer our poor hearts, hidden in her sinless heart, to the Author of all purity who alone can cleanse and make us whole.

---

[1] *Cf.* p. 302.

III. Imitation of Our Lady

Imitation of our Lady springs from love of our Lady.

Love of our Lady means love of our Lady as she is in herself by nature and by grace, gentle, loving, kind, obedient, gracious, patient, meek and humble of heart according to the precept of her Lord, purer than the whitest snow. It is impossible to have the image of Mary before our minds, without having her love in our hearts; conversely it is difficult to keep the love of Mary in our hearts, unless we keep her image in our minds. But to keep that image of perfect loveliness before the gaze necessarily carries with it some desire to be shaped ourselves on so exquisite a model. The true love of Mary carries with it the wish to be like Mary. "Imitate the Virgin," writes St. Augustine, "as much as you are able."[1]

The nature of superstition.

We have often heard of picturesque brigands in Sicily who are supposed to burn a candle to our Lady at one of her shrines, before setting out on their day's enterprise, hoping thus to conciliate the blessing of Heaven upon their evil undertaking—or of someone given over to another form of wickedness, who presumptuously continues in an evil life, but trusts the salvation of his soul to the mere wearing of the brown scapular Such cases *may* have occurred. It is difficult to set limits to human perversity. I own that I am sceptical as to their existence. I have not yet come across anyone who professed to have met the pious highwayman, or to have rubbed shoulders with the professional cut-throat who was devout to the Madonna. Whatever evidence there may be on this subject is certainly of a hearsay character. Still it is hard to set limits to human superstitions, and without doubt the sin of presumption is to be found amongst Catholics as well as amongst Protestants. It may, conceivably, have now and again taken grotesque forms. But it is quite certain that if any Catholic has deluded himself into imagining that all will be well with him, provided he continue some external practice in honour of the Blessed Virgin, he knows all the time quite well in his heart that he is deliberately contradicting the teaching of his religion. Catholic preachers in every age—particularly perhaps in the ages of faith, when faith was strong—have warned their hearers that faith without works is dead, and that it is useless to be externally devout to Mary, useless even to pray to God, unless there be a real wish in the heart to turn away from sin. Superstition is the excess of faith ; presumption is the excess of hope. Rather, superstition and presumption are misplaced faith and hope. Faith and hope irrationally exercised inevitably run to seed. Superstitions are far more likely to arise amongst those who possess no Divine Faith than amongst Catholics who by faith submit their minds to the Word of God. In adherence to a supernatural revelation it is impossible to exceed. But where the Catholic Faith is unknown, we often find strange superstitions rampant—table-turning and the like, that proceed from the excess of faith—in other words, from misplaced faith; from faith given not to God, but to man—faith irrationally based upon an imposture. Similarly, with regard to presumption. It is impossible to hope too much in the Promises of the religion revealed by God; it is easy to hope too much where there is no real ground for hope at all. It is doubtless possible for a Catholic to presume on the Mercy of God, forgetting that the Divine Mercy can only be extended to those who turn from sin; it is more than possible, it is alas! too easy for a man without a definite religion to say to himself vaguely that everything will come all right in the end, notwithstanding his sins, because "God is good."

---

[1] Serm. CXCI., *De Nat. et Gratia*, viii. 4.

However this may be, it is, admittedly, the case that if any man makes his trust in the intercession of our Lady the excuse for continuing in sin, without even the wish to give up sin, he is guilty both of superstition and of profane presumption.

But, human nature is very weak. Oftentimes some habit of sin may have been contracted by human weakness, or through the force of external circumstances, until a situation has arisen from which at the moment there seems to the sinner that he can hardly escape. His sins are not the sins of malice—he does not want to offend God. He has kept the Faith. If any man in this state still prays to Mary, still burns candles before her Images, still wears her scapular and trusts in her motherly protection, he is guilty neither of superstition, nor presumption. He is doing the very thing that he should be advised to do, he is trusting our Lady that she will obtain him the grace of repentance in the end—that he may yet detest his sins, give them up, and be reconciled to God before he die.

The weakness of human nature.

Once when giving a mission I came across a poor working woman. She had been deserted by her husband, who had treated her shamefully during five years of married life and finally, having abandoned her for another, escaped to a foreign country, leaving four young children on her hands. A stranger who was lodging in the house at the time of her desertion was kind to her in her distress, took the charge of her little children on himself, and eventually lived with her. Other children were born. In the ordinary course of my ministry I visited the poor woman. She made no secret of what had occurred. Indeed, the pathetic facts were public. She expressed to me her sorrow for her sins, but her sorrow for offending God was not strong enough to induce her to give up a good home and go with her children to the workhouse. Had I been a Saint, I suppose that I should have been able to persuade her even to this. Being what I am, so soon as I saw what were her dispositions, I did not attempt what I felt would only give useless pain, and merely asked her to promise, as she did most readily, to pray every day to our Lady that she might make her peace with God before she died. To believe that our Lady will hear that prayer is to be guilty neither of superstition nor of presumption. There are many such cases in our sad world to-day.

The well-to-do, the comfortable, those whose lines have always been cast in pleasant places, those whose passions are not strong, have no conception of the force of temptations which assail their less fortunate brothers and sisters. Too often the strong have but little feeling for the weak. But the Church of God is full of boundless compassion for sinful men and fallen women—in this, like our Lady herself, reflecting the immeasurable Mercy of God. If a man cuts himself off from any wish to serve God, to resemble in any measure the Blessed Virgin in her purity and her love of God—then, so long as he remains in that state, by his own acts he cuts himself off from legitimate hope. For all others, however great their sins, there is always ground for confidence in ultimate recovery, so long as they trust to Mary's intercession and do not forget to seek her never-failing succour. I do not believe that on the Day of Judgment our Lord will reject any soul that has honoured and loved and trusted His Blessed Mother. For my part, I am content, placing all my hope in the Infinite Mercy of God, when I think of the death and judgment that lie before me, to remember that, after all, I am the son of His Handmaiden—a son, though most unworthy, of His Holy Church and of His Mother Mary.

"Respice me, et miserere mei, Tu Domine, Deus miserator et misericors, et salvum fac filium Ancillæ Tuæ.[1]"

---

[1] Ps. lxxxv. 14, 15.

CHAPTER XXIII

EXCELLENCE OF DEVOTION TO MARY

> "*After careful examination, neither as adversary nor as friend, of the influences of Catholicism, I am persuaded that the worship of the Madonna has been one of its noblest and most vital graces, and has never been otherwise than productive of holiness of life and purity of character.*"—JOHN RUSKIN.

Woman and Mahommedanism.

To realise at all adequately some of the benefits which devotion to the Holy Mother of God have conferred upon the world, it is necessary to have lived in the East. For anyone who has been brought up in Europe and finds himself dwelling, even for a short period, in Mahommedan lands, the degradation of women that will force itself on his notice is horrible beyond words. Were it not visible before his eyes, a naked incontrovertible fact, it would be unimaginable and therefore unthinkable. The Mussulman frankly looks upon women as beings of another order from himself. With rare exceptions, all education is denied them. Reasonable converse with their masters is thus rendered impossible. To all intents and purposes they are slaves without rights of any sort.

liable, for example, to be divorced and cast out of the house on the flimsiest of pretexts. If Mahommedan women of royal rank are given some measure of education, and even allowed to enter and pray in the mosques, from which all other women are rigorously excluded, this is only a cynical inconsistency. It is taught, openly and shamelessly, that women are without souls—in this resembling the beasts of burden whose labours they are often compelled to share. It is taken for granted that woman was created merely to minister to the passions of man—to be generally at his disposal and to do his pleasure.

What Europe would be at this hour, if for long centuries wives had been permitted no direction over their husbands' lives, nor any moulding of their children's characters, if the friendship of women had been deemed worthless, and the influence of women had been non-existent—that the Mahommedan world is at this hour, and that it must remain—hard, soulless, sensual, radically barbarous, alien to our habits of thought, abhorrent to our sentiment, until woman be granted by the Moslem her rightful position in human society.

All that is best and noblest—nay, all that is decent—in Christian Europe men owe under God to the place that by common consent is allotted to woman and to her gracious presence, loved and honoured, in our midst. In all things that are essential to humanity, woman is man's equal, in many of her endowments she is man's superior—a fact that no man worthy of the name of man for one moment will deny. Were women in lands that are still Christian to be relegated to the position they occupy in lands that are still Mussulman, man's state in Europe would soon be as evil as in regions that are cursed by the presence of the baneful Turk—Christianity would vanish from our midst, and with Christianity would go all that makes life tolerable.

Woman and Christianity.

It is one of the chief glories of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ that it has known how to raise woman to the position of honour and dignity and supreme worth that she holds unchallenged in the hearts of Christian men. As long as a man keeps his respect for womanhood undimmed, there is always hope for him; let his conception of the worth of womanhood be lost, and he is on the verge of spiritual disaster that may too probably be irreparable—he is very near the shipwreck of his soul. Now, the place of women in Christianity, the veneration of women by Christians, the fact that women stand for all that is pure and beautiful in the thoughts of Christians, is combined historically with devotion to our Lady.

The thought of the Virgin Mother of God was its source. Love of that Virgin Mother inspired it through the long ages of Faith, and sustains it to-day with the same power as in any of the days that are past.

I remember that once I had been travelling in Scotland all one long summer's day. It was unbearably hot; the third-class carriage in which I was seated stopped maddeningly at every station. The atmosphere was already stifling when a woman of the people entered the compartment, and sat down opposite me in the already overcrowded place. I said to myself: "Yet another. How dreadful!" when in a moment I was rebuked indeed. The poor woman quietly opened her shawl, and I saw that she had on her lap a child. To that child she gave her breast. Suddenly it happened that the sun shone fiercely through the window, but I was gladdened as it shone upon that simple mother with her babe. For the grace of God had touched my heart and I had remembered. "Yes," I thought, "yes, thank God, I believe. I believe that once a poor Woman, rejected and despised by men, gave her breast to her Child. And that Woman was the Mother of my God." The whole scene was transfigured, made surpassingly beautiful, glorified. The Incarnation touches and makes splendid things that are in themselves colourless and ordinary. Who that believes in Jesus Christ can see a woman with her child and think awhile on his religion, without his heart burning within him and tenderness flooding his soul?—for when the Heavens once kissed the earth, and the Love of God appeared in our midst, that Love was manifested as a Child in a Woman's

An experience.

arms. Those who believe that Jesus is their Lord, and that He is Blessed Mary's Son, can hardly fail to remember, with deep feeling, that every woman is of our Lady's sex.

It should be observed that if the conception of the dignity and glory of womanhood grew gradually even in Catholic Christianity, so it has lasted even where Catholicism has ceased to dominate thought. Many an English Protestant who, thank God, has an ideal of womanhood in his soul, from which springs the spirit of true chivalry, is altogether unconscious of the fact that this ideal comes down to him as a gift from the ages of Faith, when our Lady reigned, beautiful and pure, without earthly rival in the hearts of men. But so it is. England is another place to live in, and Englishmen have an altogether different outlook upon life from what could have been possible had England never been Catholic, and our Lady's Dowry. We have all of us, Protestant as well as Catholic, entered upon a rich inheritance—bequeathed to us by our fathers who were renowned throughout all Christendom for their devotion to the Holy Mother of God. In proportion as the Faith comes back is that inheritance safeguarded from loss and from further dissipation.

Devotion to our Lady in the Ages of Faith.

Space does not permit me to dwell on the influence of devotion to our Lady upon art and literature and civilization. Suffice it to say that there was a time when the thought of our Lady and the love of our Lady, from early morn to eventide, was the glad possession of all who dwelt on English soil. Our Lady could never be forgotten. The flowers in the fields recalled the memory of Mary Most Holy by the names given them by the countryfolk to whom she was so dear; sailors went forth to sea after placing their voyages under her protection, and on their return made their offerings of thanksgiving at her shrines; the bells in the churches recalled her mysteries; burghers and warriors and dames of high degree wore her rosary at their girdle (as may yet be seen in many an ancient brass in our churches); merchants and princes vied one with another, doing works of charity in her honour; great foundations of learning were made under her invocation. Even agriculture was her debtor. As the Cistercians—so popular once in England—made desert places habitable and fruitful, their white habits found a tongue wherewith to speak to those old Monks as they went about their toil, reminding them that they were vowed in a special manner to Mary's service, and that their labour should be sweetened, since it was dedicated to their Mother, their Lady and their Queen. Life under all its aspects in Merry England was filled with the thought of Mary which was the inspiration of all endeavour; without the love of Mary, life would have seemed to our fathers to have been dull indeed and empty, for it would have been robbed of a joy that filled it with freshness and unearthliness and deep contentment—that made it a thing of perfect beauty, as, for example, when the Angelus bell broke upon their ears, it spoke to all who listened of the moment that God visited His Handmaiden and gave to us all the promise and the earnest of a Blessed Life to come. Devotion to our Lady supernaturalised all it affected, so that to those who loved Jesus and Mary, nothing henceforth, save only sin, could be without a rich blessing—nothing, save sin only, could be reckoned as unworthy of man, or as unclean and unfitted for his touch.

Our Lady and the spiritual needs of the individual soul.

In this book I have been concerned with the excellence of devotion to our Lady for the individual rather than for the community in general. Throughout the writing of it I have kept steadily before my mind the needs of the individual soul in relation to the Truths of Faith, and to Eternity.

From this point of view the blessing of devotion to our Lady can hardly be exaggerated—and this at every period of our lives.

> "Jesus and Mary," writes Dr. Northcote, "are the earliest names lisped by a Christian child. They bring the first ideas of the Faith into the infant mind by means of that relationship which it first and most readily understands—that of mother and child. As the child grows up and the passions develop and strengthen, what more general (amongst

> Catholics) or more effective protection against the seductions of sense and the violence of temptations than the love and veneration of this most spotless model of purity, the Blessed Virgin? How many wrecks have not been avoided at this most critical season of life by keeping the eye and the heart steadily fixed upon this bright Star of the Sea. And amid the multiplied interests of maturer years, what stronger anchor of the soul to heavenly things, who is more frequently invoked than her of whom 'it has not been heard at any time that anyone ever had recourse to her in vain!' Finally, the very picture of devout old age is of one telling his beads. Old age renews its youth at the altars of Mary; it is ready with aged Simeon to sing its *Nunc Dimittis* as he did when he received Jesus into his arms; it cries out, after the weary exile of this life, 'Show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.'"[1]

Our great danger is to be self-centred, to concentrate our efforts on that which passes, to live for self-indulgence, and to forget that by seeming to gain our life we shall lose it in effect. The Christian religion takes us out of ourselves, teaches us to place our treasure in Heaven, and to be content to lose our life here below, if so be that we may gain it in the life to come. That this may be a reality—something more than the repetition of phrases—it is necessary to place our Lord in the centre of our heart's affections, to be ready to make what sacrifices

---

[1] *Mary in the Gospels*, pp. 304, 305.

He may ask at our hands, to render to Him the loyalty of the affections and the will. But this is easy to write, hard to practise. We do not see our Lord; we *do* see and feel the attractions of the visible world of sense—feel them sometimes none the less strongly, though they tend to draw us away from His service. It becomes, therefore, of supreme importance in the spiritual warfare to make use of all creatures that we may as a means of attaching us to our Creator. The more we think of Mary, the more we trust Mary, the more we love Mary, in proportion as we get out of ourselves—out of the prison of the body, out of the earthly environment that encompasses us and weighs us down—the more closely shall we find that we are drawn to the thought of God and to trust in God, and to the love of God, which it is the end of our religion to enkindle and keep aflame in our souls. This is the supreme excellence, as it is the justification of devotion to our Lady, that it leads us infallibly to love Jesus Christ her Son. "The more we love Mary, the more we shall love Jesus." This is the assurance given us by St. Alphonsus. All experience testifies to the truth of his words.

St. Bernard has written: "There can be no doubt that whatever we utter in praise of the Mother belongs to her Son, and also that when we praise the Son we are proclaiming the glory of His Mother. For if, according to Solomon, 'a wise man is his father's glory,'[1] how much more glorious to be made the Mother of the Very Wisdom?"[2]

The more glorious is any son, the greater glory will accrue to his mother. In the case of our Lady *all* the extrinsic glory flows from the Wonder of her Motherhood, from the Person of her Son. It is the unique glory of our Lady to be the Mother of Jesus; as then we think of her glory, our minds travel necessarily to Him who is her glory's source.

Let me write it once again, and for the last time: we could not separate Jesus and Mary even if we would. As Mary is the *Stella Matutina*, the Morning Star, whose rising heralded the coming of the Sun of Justice from the East, so is it in the lives of Christian men. It may be that the soul is, as it were, shut in, enveloped in darkness, when but a flicker of light is to be discerned in the prison cell, where it is held captive; yet some small shining from our Lady's gracious beauty pierces the walls, and prevents the blackness all around from being complete. The Mother of God has not been altogether forgotten. If it be only a Hail Mary that is said now and again in her honour, still her name passes the lips. If this be continued there is no cause for fear as to the ultimate result. The sun will shine anew, and its warmth will pierce the opposing barriers, and our Lord once more will return to the soul from which He had been banished. When I write this, I am writing that which I know. It is within the knowledge of every priest who has worked for souls that devotion to our Lady—unless abandoned—will certainly bring back, in the end, the grace of God that may have been lost by sin. As there always remains hope for a man's character, so long as he has preserved respect for womanhood, so is there always hope for a man's religion to assert itself and regain its hold upon his life, so long as he has preserved some devotion to our Lady.

---

[1] Prov. x. 1.

[2] *Super Missus est;* Hom. IV. 1.

It is impossible rightly to think of our Lord Jesus Christ apart either from His Eternal Father in Heaven, or from His human Mother on earth. He is true God, Son of His Father from Eternity. He is true Man, Son of His Mother in time. This is the essence of the Christian Creed. It is impossible rightly to know the Eternal Father, unless we know the Son,[1] and we cannot separate even in thought the human Mother from her Divine Child. As devotion to the Mother of God necessarily preserves faith in the Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ—so the love of Mary leads to the love of her Son. This has been the oft-repeated burden of this book. If it be false, there is no meaning in Christianity. But we know that it is not false, but true—no cunningly devised fable, but the very heart of reality.

So through life, every year that passes we learn more utterly to trust our Lady, more completely to abandon ourselves into her keeping. She will enable us to have our conversation in Heaven—an exhortation of the Apostle to which it is so hard to attend whilst we are yet dwelling upon the earth—she will hear us when we pray to her and will obtain for our souls the grace of her Son, she will succour us in our warfare with the powers of evil, she will help us to sorrow for our sins, she will teach us to pray to God, she will be *causa nostræ lætitiæ*, the joy of our lives, the comfort of the dark and lonely moments that must come to all from time to time as they sojourn in that which is a place of exile and therefore a valley of tears. And if we thank our Lord during life that He has taught us to love and trust His Blessed Mother, what will it be when we come to die? How shall we be able to thank Him then? Even now we may take to our hearts the consolation which St. Jerome proffered to his daughter Eustochium:

---

[1] John xiv. 6, 7; xvi. 3.

> "Go forth, I pray, for a little while from prison, and picture to your eyes the recompense for present toil, which neither eye hath seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. What a day shall that be when Mary, the Lord's Mother, shall come to meet thee."[1]

Our Lady and the hour of death.

And when the reality comes, and we are bidding our last farewell to this land of shadows, when we know that soon we shall pass into the Presence of our Judge—oh then, the prayer that has fallen from our lips tens of thousands of times during life will surely be heard. Mary, Mother of God, will pray for us poor sinners in that dread hour. The Saints have often seen her before they passed away. *Madonna Mia*—"Oh, my dear Lady," exclaimed St. Philip Neri as he saw her by his side. Such a vision of beauty may not be granted to us here below. But one day we shall see her in the Paradise of God. Then at last will Mary show unto us the Blessed Fruit of her womb, Jesus. She will be to us *Felix cæli porta*—the gate of a glad eternity. Then at last all shall be fulfilled—the aspirations of all our years shall at length be satisfied —weariness shall be past and the struggle and the loneliness—when the veil shall be lifted, when together with Mary our mother, we behold the Face of her Son.

---

[1] Ep. xii., *Ad Eustochium.*

And through Eternity we shall thank our Lord that He has taught us to love and to trust the Mother who is so dear to His Sacred Heart, the Mother whom in His Mercy He has given us to be our mother too, Mary Most Holy—the gentle mother of sinful men—the Great Mother of the Everlasting God.

INDEX I

LIST IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF FATHERS OF THE CHURCH AND ECCLESIASTICAL WRITERS QUOTED IN THIS BOOK WHO FLOURISHED UP TO THE TIME OF ST. BERNARD.

JUSTIN. Saint and Martyr, called by Tertullian *Philosophus et Martyr*, converted to Christianity A.D. 130; martyred A.D. 165.

IRENÆUS. Saint and Martyr. Born about A.D. 140.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA. Born about A.D. 150.

TERTULLIAN. Born about A.D. 160.

ORIGEN. Born A.D. 185 or 186; died 254 or 255.

GREGORY THAUMATURGUS. Saint, Bishop of Neocæsarea. Born about A.D. 213; died between 270 and 275.

VICTORINUS. Bishop of Pettau, Martyr. Died about A.D. 303.

METHODIUS. Saint and Martyr, Bishop of Olympus. Died about A.D. 311.

ATHANASIUS. Saint, Bishop of Alexandria, Doctor of the Church. Born about A.D. 296; died 373.

EPHREM THE SYRIAN. Saint, Doctor of the Church. Born about A.D. 306. St. Ephrem was ordained priest by St. Basil the Great. His praises are celebrated by St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, St. Jerome, and other Fathers of the Church. In many churches his writings were publicly read after the Holy Scriptures. Died A.D. 373.

TITUS OF BOSTRIA. Died about A.D. 374.

BASIL THE GREAT. Saint, Bishop of Cæsarea, Doctor of the Church. Born about A.D. 329; died 379.

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM. Saint, Doctor of the Church. Died A.D 386.

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUM. Saint. Born about A.D. 330; died 389 or 390.

GREGORY OF NYSSA. Saint. Died about A.D. 395.

Ambrose. Saint, Bishop of Milan, Doctor of the Church. Born A.D. 340; died 395.

Ambrosiaster. Latter part of the fourth century.

Zeno. Saint, Bishop of Verona from A.D. 362–380.

Epiphanius. Saint, Bishop of Constantia, the ancient Salamina. Born about A.D. 315; died 403.

Optatus. Saint, Bishop of Milevis or Mileum. Wrote work against Donatists, A.D. 370 (second edition 385).

John Chrysostom. Saint, Bishop of Constantinople, Doctor of the Church. Born about A.D. 344; died 407.

Gaudentius. Saint, Bishop of Brescia from A.D. 387 to 410.

Jerome. Saint, Doctor of the Church. Born between A.D. 331 and 340; died 420.

Vincent of Lerins. Died before A.D. 450 and probably shortly after 434.

Augustine. Saint, Bishop of Hippo, Doctor of the Church. Born A.D. 354; died 430.

Paulinus of Nola. Saint. Born A.D. 353; died 431.

Peter Chrysologus. Saint, Bishop of Ravenna. Born A.D. 406; died 450.

Theodotus. Saint, Bishop of Ancyra in Galatia. Died early part of the fifth century.

Cyril of Alexandria. Saint, Doctor of the Church. Died A.D. 444.

Proclus. Saint, Patriarch of Constantinople. Died A.D. 446 or 447.

Basil of Seleucia. Died A.D. 459.

Maximus of Turin. Saint. Born about A.D. 380; died 465.

Eleutherius. Bishop of Tournai. Lived in the fifth century.

Gregory of Tours. Saint. Born A.D. 538; died 593 or 594.

Gregory the Great. Saint, Pope, Doctor of the Church. Born A.D. 540; died 604.

Sophronius. Patriarch of Jerusalem. Born about A.D. 560; died 638.

Andrew of Crete. Saint. Died about A.D. 720.

Germanus of Constantinople. Saint. Died A.D. 733.

Bede, the Venerable. Saint, Doctor of the Church. Born A.D. 672 or 673; died 735.

John Damascene. Saint, Doctor of the Church. Died about A.D. 750.

Bernard. Saint, Doctor of the Church. Born A.D. 1090; died 1153.

INDEX II

GENERAL INDEX IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

A

Aaron's Rod, 378
Aberdeen, Our Lady of, 415
Abi-Murad, Mgr. Paul, Archbishop of Damietta, 324-325
Abigail, 345-348
Abyssinians and Our Lady, The, 41
Advocata, Meaning of, in Irenæus, 34, *n.* 2
Albert the Great, Blessed, 199
Alexandria, 403-404
Alphonsus de' Liguori, St., Doctor of the Church, 86, 180, 181, 315, 331
Ambrose, St., Doctor of the Church, 57, 78, 190, 254, 259, 286, 337, 371, 372, 373, 375, 378, 380, 381
Ambrose, *pseudo-*, 379, 386
Ambrosiaster, 440 *n.*
Ancren Riwle, The, 252
Andrew of Crete, St., 20
Anselm, St., Doctor of Church, 76
Antoninus, St., Doctor of the Church, 86, 176
Apocryphal Gospels, The, 9, 12
Aquinas, Thomas, St., Doctor of the Church, 14
Archelaus, St., 50
Ark of the Covenant, 381
Ark of Noah, 382-383
Athanasius, St., Doctor of the Church, 395
Augustine, St., Doctor of the Church, 5, 14, 16, 43, 66, 69, 70, 71, 76, 142, 156, 166 *n.* 1, 227, 254, 255, 286, 294, 365, 366, 368 *n.* 2
Augustine, *pseudo-*, 279, 385

B

Barnes, Mgr., 425
Basil of Cæsarea, St., Doctor of the Church, 158, 395
Basil of Seleucia, 51, 53, 144, 434
Bede, Ven. St., Doctor of the Church, 68, 260-262
Bellarmine, Cardinal, Ven. S. J., 320
Benedict XIV., Pope, 14, 87
Bernard, St., 7, 31, 83, 157, 177, 185, 202, 297, 305-308, 312, 315, 321, 322, 323, 334, 339, 514
Bernardine of Siena, St., 86, 135, 319
Bethsabee, 348, 349
Billot, Cardinal S. J., 87
Bossuet, 275, 278
Bourdaloue, 186
Bridgett, Fr., C. SS. R., 132, 412 *n.*, 414-415
Buckfast, Our Lady of, 415
Bush, The Burning, 378

C

Catacombs, Pictures of Our Lady in, 425, 427
Celestine I., St., Pope, 397
Chrysologus, Peter, St., Doctor of the Church, 7
Chrysostom, J., St., Dr. of Church, 59, 158, 161, 233, 266, 377
Clement, St., Pope, 36
Cloud, The Light, 379
Collyridians, The, 429
Council of Chalcedon, 431
    Ephesus, 20, 59 *n.* 2, 163, 377, 382, 397-401, 430-431

Council of Trent, 156, 293
Curé d'Ars, The, 435-436, 465
Cyril of Alexandria, St., Doctor of the Church, 158, 163 164, 364, 381, 397-400
Cyril of Jerusalem, St., Doctor of the Church, 378, 397

D

Damascene, John, St., Doctor of the Church, 3, 10, 21, 290
Debbora, 341-343
Development of Devotion to Our Lady, 419-441
Diana, Temple of, at Ephesus, 390-393
Difficulties in the Fathers, 158-162
Duns Scotus, 45-46

E

Eleutherius of Tournai, St., 323
Ephrem, St., 11, 39, 40-48, 81, 262-264, 317, 322, 334, 374, 379, 380, 383, 433
Epiphanius, St., 56, 58, 77, 273, 429
Epiphanius, *pseudo*-, 6, 7, 38
Erasmus, 410
Esther, 356-360
Eve, 337

F

Faguet, Estelle, 475-479
Francis of Sales, St., Doctor of the Church, 86, 157, 173

G

Gate, The Eastern, 38
Gaudentius, St., 228, 286
George of Nicomedia, 85
Germanus of Constantinople, St., 315
Gibbon and the Immaculate Conception, 40
Gideon's Fleece, 379
Gregory of Nyssa, St., 11, 448
Gregory of Tours, St., 291, 452
Gregory Thaumaturgus, St., 37, 449
Gregory the Great, St., Pope, Doctor of the Church, 383, 453-454
Gregory Nazianzum, St., *Theologus*, 395, 451
Grignon de Montfort, Blessed, 42, 499
Ground, The Thirsty, 377
Guarric, Abbot, 79

H

Hedley, Bishop, 87
Helvidian Heretics, The, 429
Helvidius, 57
Herbert, George, 243-246
Holofernes, 351-353
Hurter, Fr., S. J., 87

I

Ineffabilis, The Bull, 44
Irenæus, St., 34

J

Jacob's Ladder, 323-324
Jael, 341-343
Jerome, St., 38, 57, 63, 293, 319, 341, 375, 377, 382, 517
John the Evangelist, St., 289-290
Johnson, Samuel, Dr., 304 *n.* 1
Joseph, St., 15, 266-267, 289-290
Joy in Suffering, 130-131
Judith, 349-355
Justin, St., 5, 33
Justina, St., 451
Juvenal, Bishop of Jerusalem, 21

K

Katharine of Genoa, St., 131
Keble, John, 246-248
Koran, The, and—
    Our Lady's Immaculate Conception, 40
    Our Lady's Parentage, 4
    Our Lady's Presentation, 12
    Our Lady's Virginity, 59

L

Labouré, Katharine, 457-460
La Salette, 463-466
Leo XIII., Pope, 87, 315
Leonard of Port Maurice, St., 86
Lincoln, Our Lady of, 415 *n.* 2
Liturgy, The Greek and the Theotokos, 326-330
Liturgy, The Mozarabic, 287 *n.* 2
Lourdes, 466-470

M

Martyrs, Early Devotion to, 434
Marucchi, Professor, 426
Mary, The Blessed Virgin—
  Mary's Birthplace, 3
  Mary at Cana, 204-229, 369
  Mary, Channel of Grace, 314-324
  Mary and the Church, 363-375
  Mary's Death, Place of, 20-21
    Fact and Reasons for, 273-278
  Mary's Dolours—
    i. Simeon's Prophecy, 105-110
    ii. Flight into Egypt, 110-114
    iii. Loss of the Holy Child, 114-117
    iv. Meeting on Road to Calvary, 117-119
    v. The Crucifixion, 119-122
    vi. The Taking Down from the Cross, 122-125
    vii. The Burial of Our Lord, 125-129
  Mary, the Second Eve, 27-28
  Mary's Feasts—
    i. The Immaculate Conception, 23-48
    ii. The Nativity, 2
    iii. The Holy Name, 5-8
    iv. The Presentation in the Temple, 10 13
    v. The Espousals, 15
    vi. The Annunciation, 136-138
    vii. The Visitation, 138-141

Mary, The Blessed Virgin (*continued*)—
  Mary's Feasts—
    viii. The Expectation, 16
    ix. The Purification, 105-110, 133, 134
    x. The Dolours, 103-129
    xi. The Assumption, 278-292
  Mary and the Greek Liturgy, 324-330
  Mary's Images, 402-418
  Mary's Images in England, 410-415
  Mary's Joys—
    i. The Annunciation, 136-138
    ii. The Visitation, 138-141
    iii. The Nativity, 141-145
    iv. The Adoration of the Kings, 145-149
    v. The Finding in the Temple, 149-150
    vi. The Resurrection, 150-152
    vii. The Assumption, 153-154
  Mary, Mother of God, 49-72, 394-401
  Mary, Mother of the Brethren of Christ, 74-76
    Mother of the Members of Christ, 76-79
    Mother of the Disciples of Christ, 80-86
  Mary at Nazareth, 18
  Mary's Parents, 4-5
  Mary during the Public Ministry of Christ, 230-240
  Mary's Sinlessness, 43, 155-171
  Mary's Twofold Blessedness, 69-71
  Mary's Types, 336-362
  Mary's Virtues—
    Charity, 199-203
    Faith, 179-180
    Fortitude, 178-179
    Hope, 181-183
    Humility, 183-189
    Justice, 178-179

Mary, The Blessed Virgin (*continued*)—
  Mary's Virtues—
    Prayer, 194-199, 302
    Prudence, 178-179
    Purity, 189-194
    Temperance, 178-179
    Virginity, 57-65, 142
  Mary's Vow of Virginity, 15
  Mary's Words, 250-272
Mary of Egypt, St., 403-410
Medal, The Miraculous, 330, 457-460
Methodius, St,, 106, 107, 385
Miriam, 340 341

N

Necromancy, 442-443
Nestorians, Tradition of, concerning the Immaculate Conception, 41 *n.* 2
Nestorius, 394-400
Newman, Cardinal, 45, 160, 161, 163, 280, 423
Nicholas, Auguste M., 366
Northcote, Dr., 512-513

O

Optatus of Milevis, St., 65, 84 *n.*
Origen, 15, 36, 37, 79, 80, 138, 143, 158, 162, 164, 267, 318-319
Original Sin, Doctrine of, 23-27

P

Paradise, The Earthly, 376
Patriarchates, The Three Great, 32
Paulinus of Nola, St., 165, 286, 370, 435-436
Pearson, Bishop, 61-62
Pellevoisin, 475-479
Perpetual Succour, Our Lady of, 416-418
Pesch, Fr., S. J., 87
Peter of Blois, 133
Pius VIII., Pope, 87
Pius IX., Pope, 315
Pius X., Pope, 315
Pontmain, 470-475
Probatica, The, 3
Proclus, St., 59, 378, 379, 382, 383
Pulcheria, Empress, 21

R

Rachel, 339-340
Ratisbonne, M. Alphonse, Miraculous Conversion of, 460-462
Rebecca, 337-339
Rosary, The, 495
Rosary, The Franciscan, 135
Ruth, 343-345

S

Sanday, Rev. Dr., 59-61
Sara, 337
Servants of Mary, Order of, 135
Sophronius, St., 405-409
Soubirous, Bernadette, Ven., 467
Southwell, Ven. Fr., S.J., 29
Suarez, Ven. Fr., S.J., 11

T

Temptations, Their Source, 168
Tertullian, 33, 166 *n.* 1
Theodotus of Ancyra, St., 15, 56, 167, 377, 378
Theotokos, Title of, 394-400
Thomas Aquinas, St., Doctor of the Church, 175, 199
Thomas of Canterbury, St., 133-153
Thomas of Villanova, St., 86
Titus, Bostrensis, 257

U

Ullathorne, Archbishop, 495

V

Victorinus of Pettau, 385
Vigilantius, 293
Vincent of Lerins, St., 419-422
Vision in Apocalypse of Woman and Child, 384-388
Visions, Caution of Church concerning, 446

W

Wise Men, The Three, 147-148

Z

Zeno, St., 367

Printed in England

Date Due

MAY 4 '53	NOV 15	1983	
	DEC 22 '83		
APR 28 '54	~~APR 0 6 1980~~		
MAY 23 '5	DEC 22 [illegible]		
MAY 10 '58			
MAY 26 '58	SEP 26	1995	
Term '62	~~DEC [illegible]~~		
APR 21 '65			
MAY 26 '65	~~[illegible]~~		
APR 6 '68			
OCT 23 1968	DEC 11	1997	
JAN 1 '69	APR 0 0	2003	
DEC 17 '69			
DEC 14 '70			
JAN 10 '71			
MAY 26 '72			
DEC 15 '72			

Library Bureau Cat. No. 1137

WELLS BINDERY
WALTHAM, MASS.
JAN 1953

~~230.2 V44~~ CLAPP
3 5002 00120 4887
Vassall-Phillips, Oliver Rodie
The mother of Christ : or, The Blessed V

BT 602 .V37 1922

Vassall-Phillips, Oliver
Rodie, 1857-1932.

The mother of Christ